

## **Traditional market days and branding strategies in Marketing**

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### **Abstract**

This study focused on different traditional market days and branding strategies in marketing, drawing examples from different ethnicities like the Igbo in South-East, Yoruba in South-West, and the Ogoni people in South-South Nigeria. In order to achieve set objectives a total of 109 respondents were studied in various rural communities drawn from different Local Government Areas in Ogoni (comprising Khana, Gokana, Tai, Eleme). Also, secondary data and literature were reviewed with a view of gaining insights on different approaches and contribution from other tribes (Yoruba, Igbo, Efik, Edo, etc.) on the subject matter. Similarly, data generated were subjected to analysis, using Spearman rank correlation coefficient aided with the SPSS version 20.0 software. In conclusion, traditional market days have long been used in the time past and can be used in contemporary marketing as an effective tool for branding and product differentiation. Based on the above conclusion, we recommend that modern day marketing scholars should conduct more research on traditional market days to appreciate its application and relevance in modern day marketing as there are limited literatures available in this study area, yet it offers a wide area of study if given devoted attention.

**Key words:** Traditional market days, Ogoni, Igbo, Yoruba, branding.

## **1. Introduction**

Marketing is pivotal to the success of every organisation- big or small, because without marketing there will be no avenue for producers to reach the consumers (Cant and Wiid, 2016). What makes an organisation unique is its branded offerings available in the market. Organisations have realised that brand is one of the intangible assets at their disposal to create a differential advantage and withstand competition.

Branding represents the name, logo, trademark, and package design on a product or an organisation that differentiates it from others in the market place (Kwortnik, 2011). Branding makes it easier for consumers to identify a product or organisation among gamut of businesses around offering similar value. A brand also serves as an organisation's intellectual property which is legally protected by brand owners.

Although scholars like Hanna and Rowley (2008) concur that branding as a construct in marketing is traced to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century during the emergence of some branded consumer goods like Quaker Oats and Gillette, the term is actually as old as man. The concept of branding can be dated as far back as the stone age when hunters used distinguished brands of weapons for hunting, when herdsmen inflicted different marks on their sheep to distinguish one sheep from the other, etc. (Hampf and Lindberg-Repo, 2011). Branding is as old as name calling. The names we bear, naming of our children and other household belongings are all forms of branding that is not new to man. That is to say what we call branding today has long been in existence right from creation in the Garden of Eden when God gave Adam the authority to name all the creatures in the garden.

Branding influences the overall attitude and perception of the consumer. Zhang (2015) posits that brand image is a major driver of brand equity and it poses a lasting effect on the behaviour of a consumer in terms of his/ her purchase and re-purchase decisions. Modern day market space is experiencing hyper-active competition such that organisations are devising strategies that differentiate their offerings from competitors' brands (Janiszewska and Insch, 2012), thereby making them stand out uniquely in the midst of intense competition.

Scholars like Omole, et al. (2013); Hodder, (1961) have given their rich opinions on the subject matter. However, there are still a lot to be done on traditional market days as there are still limited literatures available. Also, these authors do not discuss how these traditional market days can be used as branding strategy in marketing. This paper therefore identifies this gap and tends to examine traditional markets days and branding strategies in marketing.

### **1.1 Study objectives**

The central objectives of this paper include to:

1. identify various traditional market days
2. understand the concept of branding

3. examine how traditional market days are used as branding strategies in marketing

## **1.2 Research Questions**

1. what are the various traditional market days?
2. what is branding?
3. how can traditional market days be used as branding strategies in marketing?

## **2. Literature review**

Branding was originally defined by the American Marketing Association (AMA) as a label, logo, name, sign that differentiates one goods and services of one seller from the other. It has since been argued that this definition limits branding to goods only. A broader definition was further given by McGnally et al. (1999) cited in (Hanna and Rowley, 2008) where brand was referred to as company, policy, and all physical entities of an organisation.

Branding differentiates a product or company in the market place, serving as a sieve for alternative purchase decision. According to Institute for the Future (2002), a good brand solidifies consumer trust and consistency towards the product, leading to brand loyalty and repeat purchase.

### **2.1 Traditional market days in Igbo**

The Igbo calendar comprises of 13 months in a year (Afo), 7 weeks or 28 days in a month (Onwa), and 4 days in a week (Izu), with one extra day added to the last month of the year. The four days in a week which also represent the four major market days in Igbo land include Eke, Ori, Afor and Nkwo (Onwuejeogwu, 1981). These market days are observed by the Igbos as days they converge together for their trading activities. These days are usually named after market days in different parts of Igbo land (for instance Eke market, Ori market, Nkwo market, Afor market). According to history, the mystery behind the naming of these market days can traced to a certain four strangers that came to visit the king called Eze Nri for the fifth Eze Nri that reigned between 1300-1390AD (Obindigbo, 2015). It was reported that the visitors were shown hospitality by the king and were being offered food and drinks during their stay, on their departure they instructed the king and his subjects to always observe these days (Eke, Ori, Afor and Nkwo) which also happened to be the names of the strangers/ visitors as market days during which they will carry out their trading activities. From that day till this present day, these four days are observed as Igbo traditional market days, and are also used to count the Igbo native week (Izu) in Igbo calendar.

Festivals are celebrated on these market days which include the new year festival (Igu Aro), a period for the commencement of the planting season; and the harvest festival (Emume Onwasato). New born babies are also named after these market days depending on the day a child is born.

## 2.2 Traditional Market days in Ogoni

There are five (5) market days in the history of Ogoni. The five market days also represent the five days of week in Ogoni calendar. The names of the market days were given by the forefathers of the land and still exist till date despite modern day civilization and technological advancement. The mystery behind the naming of these market days and their sequential order remain unknown and cannot be explained till date. Among these market days are working days and days that are declared sacred and are observed by the entire people of Ogoni (i.e. Khana, Gokana, Tai and Eleme) irrespective of slight language differences. These market days also in their chronological order are known as;

Deezia

Deesor

Deekor

Deemua, and

Deebom

These market days represent the five major market days in Ogoni, although different areas/ villages observe different days as their major market days or days major trading activities are carried out. For instance, in Luebe community, Deemua is regarded as the major market day where other nearby villages converge with their various farm produce to buy and sell; whereas in Bori urban (the traditional headquarter of Ogoni), there are two major market days- Deezia and Deemua. Deezia is regarded as small market day while Deemua is big market day. Although Bori market is a daily market, these two market days are the days that people from the various villages in Ogoni come to Bori with their farm produce and other wares for exchange purposes.

For clarity purpose, these market days would be discussed one after the other in their order of occurrence.

**Deezia:** Deezia is the first day of the week. It is one of the major market days whereby the general population of Ogoni people converge at Bori market to trade. It is usually observed as a small market day in Bori market. The significance of this day is that people that could not meet up with their trading activities in their individual village markets will come to Bori to buy and sell.

**Deesor:** The second day of the week in Ogoni calendar, Deesor is a day that people go to mini markets/ farm markets (bush markets) called “Kedu Deewii” to trade. The uniqueness of this market is the practice of trade by barter which still operates till this day, where cooked food stuffs like rice, fish and other sea food like periwinkles (atuu) are exchanged for cassava tubers (Akpakporo) which is also regarded as a major staple food in Ogoni. In other villages like Lueku and Taabaa, Deesor is a major market day where people from other villages and towns come to trade in the market called “Dusor”. In some communities, Deesor is a free day and has no significant attachment to any event. It is always a busy day for farming and also for people to go about fetching firewood and water. In Luebe, Deesor is a day that people go to old farm to harvest cassava and soak it in nearby streams to fabricate into fufu or garri. It is also said that anybody seen with basin load of cassava on any day other than Deesor is likely to be questioned for explanation and clarification on how and from where he/ she got the cassava. On this day, communal farming (massive farming activity at a particular farming area on a particular day earmarked for farming in a particular farming season/ year) is not allowed hence people only go to old farms to uproot cassava.

**Deekor:** This is the third market day and also the third day in the Ogoni calendar. Deekor is a free day in Ogoni where people go to farm or market depending on their individual schedule. It is a day that the people of Okwale community observe as their major market day and converge at a market called “Dukor” for their trading activities. Also, on Deekor there is

provision for communal farming, people are free to go to any farm of their choice both old and new farm, villagers can also host any event (celebration of the birth of a child, burial, etc.) without any questioning.

**Deemua:** Deemua is the fourth day of week and is observed as a big market day in Ogoni. In Bori market it observed as a big market day where people from the different villages and local government areas in Ogoni and neighbouring tribes/ local government like Andoni, Opobo/ Nkoro, Okrika and even people all the way from Port Harcourt and far away Akwa Ibom come to trade. Deemua is also a major market day in Luebe community where neighbouring villagers converge in a market known as “Dumua” to buy and sell. The market (Dumua) starts from 12noon to about 5.30pm after which everybody retire to their respective villages.

**Deebom:** Deebom is the fifth and also the last day of the week in Ogoni calendar. It is a day of relaxation and merriment after the week’s toiling and struggling. It is a day everybody sits at home and enjoys the reward of his/ her week long labour. Although it is not observed as a major market day, it is one of the market days for daily markets like Bori market, and it is counted among the five days that will make up the next market day, thereby completing the circle of the five calendar days of the week. Group works like moulding, building of mud houses and hurts, etc. are usually done on this day because there is no farming on Deebom. Community activities/ chores like clearing of grasses from pathways are also done on this day. Also, cassava tubers that were fabricated on the previous days are processed on Deebom. There are no major farming activities on this day except minor fetching of firewood and checking of trap by hunters. Even though there are no laws binding on the people not to do any rigorous farming activities, they consciously and intentionally decide and declare Deebom a “holiday” for them to relax and make merry. The villagers are entertained with different display of masquerades and other traditional plays and dances on this day for people to watch and be happy.

### 2.3 Counting of days of the week

After the first Deezia of the week, counting to the next five calendar days will always be a next Deezia. This counting pattern also applies to the market days, for instance five days after Deemua (big market day) will give you the next Deemua. This is known as “Kpordee” and was used to count days in the calendar those days when there was no calendar. Kpordee in Ogoni means five days before or after. Another term for counting market days and calendar days in Ogoni is “Taa eeri” which means fifteen days before or after also known as three market days.

### 2.4 Traditions binding these market days

There are some days of the week that are regarded as “good” or “free” days and “evil” or abominable days according to tradition and custom of Ogoni people.

**Deemua:** Deemua is respected by tradition as the most senior of all the market days in Ogoni. It is also referred to as evil day, and on this day anybody that dies through any bloody means (Lu-mii) such as gun shot, suicide, drowning, or critically ill and got bloated prior to death will not be buried at home but sent to the evil forest after all traditional rites have been observed. In the event of normal death, a person that dies on Deemua cannot be buried until the next day or any other free day. Since Deemua is regarded as a bad day in Ogoni, it is generally believed that someone that dies on this day is also a bad/ evil person, and so must not be buried on that day even though such a person is rotten, as there was no knowledge of embalment (a practice of preserving dead bodies in safety at home from decaying)in those

days until recently when people started embalming dead bodies and subsequently began the practice of depositing them in the morgue.

Also, anybody that was earlier suspected of witchcraft or any evil on the previous days is been paraded, judged and give an oath at the town square on Deemua for the decision to excommunicate him if found guilty or exonerate him if innocent to be reached. As part of punishment and to find out the truth, they are being stripped naked, and if the suspect is proving stubborn to speak the truth the community law enforcers will heap a bunch of soldier ant on his head to bite him until he confesses to the crime being accused of. One major significance of Deemua is that cases of witchcraft cannot be tried or judged on any other day apart from Deemua. People are not allowed by tradition to seek for a bride's hand in marriage on Deemua. Apart from Deemua every other days are regarded as free days where people are free to go about their normal events depending on the activities earmarked for each day of the week (e.g. farming, trading, holiday, etc.). However, in Babbe kingdom (Sii village to be precise), both Deemua and Deebom are regarded as days of sacrifice in the land and days to appease the gods of the land. The Ogoni new yam festival is usually celebrated on Deemua or Deebom. Children are also named after these days depending on the day a child is born.

## 2.5 Traditional market days in Yoruba

The traditional days of the week as recognized by the Yorubas can be categorized into two:

- i. The traditional four days a week
- ii. The seven calendar days a week

The Yorubas have 4 traditional days a week dedicated to the Orisas. Orisa is the representative of Divinity on earth. These 4 days which are reserved for various traditional activities, festivals and appeasements of the gods of the land include;

Day 1: Dedicated to Obatala (Sopanna, Iyaami, and Egungun)

Day 2: Dedicated to Orunmila (Esu and Osun)

Day 3: Dedicated to Ogun (Osoosi)

Day 4: Dedicated to Sango (Oya)

**Obatala (Sopanna, Iyaami, and Egungun):** Translated as “the possessor of visions”, Obatala is also referred to as the principal Orisa who acts as the principal emissary of Olodumare on Aye and the custodian of the culture of the Yoruba people whose duty is to stand in for the all-powerful and busy Olodumare who ordinarily does not have the time to attend to every single living creature.

**Orunmila (Esu and Osun):** Orunmila is Orisa of Divination and founder of the Ifa sciences, having 16 palm nuts. Oshun is also the Orisa of fertility whose responsibility is to ensure that every woman's pregnancy is safeguarded.

**Ogun (Osoosi):** This is the Orisa in charge of metal and war crafts of Yoruba land. Also known as the custodian of truth who must ensure that justice and equity is upheld at all times, Ogun usually does this with a piece of metal in his mouth.

**Sango (Oya):** Sango which literally means “to strike or fight with stones” is the Orisa of Energy. This is the Orisa responsible for fighting and conquering all seen and unseen battles fought in Yoruba land and to ensure that victory is assured at every given time.

The seven days a week (OSE) which also match with the Gregorian calendar (Kojoda) include;

1. Ojo-Aiku (Sunday)
2. Ojo-Aje (Monday)
3. Ojo- Ishegun (Tuesday)
4. Ojo-Rini (Wednesday)
5. Ojo-Bo/Alamisi (Thursday)
6. Ojo-Eti (Friday)
7. Ojo-Abameta (Saturday)

These days are dedicated for doing business; hence, the Yorubas operate a periodic market (Hodder, 1961) that runs all the days of the week where they have the day market, and the night market or evening markets. The rural night markets which often starts at dusk to about 10.00pm is the most wide spread type of local market in Yoruba land.

## **2.6 Edo traditional market days (Edeki)**

There are four (4) traditional market days in Edo land. These days which also form the four cardinal points: East, West, North and South include;

1. Eken
2. Ori (Ekioba)
3. Okuo
4. Aho (Agbado)

**Eken:** Eken is a day of rest/ holiday in Edo land, and also represents the East cardinal point. Eken is the day set aside for household chores and holding of community functions. In modern day, Eken usually falls on weekends (Saturdays and Sundays) so as to accommodate visitors from far and near in any communal activity fixed on Eken.

Orie (Ekioba): Ekioba which means Oba market is a market day reserved for very important functions and is regarded as the luckiest of all days in Oto Edo (Edo land). It is a day when symbolic activities like coronation of new Oba, marriages, construction of new buildings, etc. are slated. Ekioba is also called working day and is also used for the West cardinal point.

Aho (Agbado): Translated as “trading day”, this is the market day the popular Ikpoba Hill market holds in Edo land. It is against the custom of the Edo people to fix any important function such as marriages on this day. Agbado also represents the South cardinal point.

Okuo: Okuo market day also called Ekenaka is used for North cardinal point.

## **2.7 Traditional market days in Efik**

Also, in Efik there are 4 traditional market days namely; Ekwuru Efiang, Ekwuru Arar, Ekwuru Eyirio and Ekwuru Ekpem (Okehie-Offoha and Sadiku, 1996). These market days like others earlier discussed are used for trading and exchange of goods, services and ideas among people from different villages.

## **2.8 Traditional market days and branding**

Branding refers to the use of name, term, symbol, and/ or design, for product identification. A brand is a name, symbol or any other form of identification that differentiates a product or company from the other. Trade mark is a legal term that includes words, symbols, and/ or marks that are registered by law for use of a single business entity.

Branding strategies are a collection of techniques that create a differentiated identity for a particular product, service and organization. Branding strategies are those game plans that an organization, individual, or a group of people use to differentiate one product/ service, object/ item, day/activity, etc. from the other. Naming has been an old tradition of man; although it was not recognized as a concept “branding” (i.e. what’s new is the nomenclature and not the practice). The naming of our new born children after the various traditional market days and the careful nurturing and grooming of these children to ensure they grow up to become useful citizens in the near future can be likened to innovating and nurturing a brand (product, service, or company) to ensure that it is uniquely distinguished and stands out in the midst of numerous competing brands in the market.

Traditional market days can be used as branding strategy as they differentiate a particular day in the calendar from another; distinguish a particular market day (big or small market day) from the other; used to identify farming days in a particular farming season; celebration of festivals and cultural displays; used to mark/ observe different traditional rites and rituals; and used to showcase different cultural heritage among various tribes and cultural divide. People are named after these market days. Forinstance the Igbos bear names like Okorie, Agbafor, Nwankwo, Nweke, etc. just as the Ogonis bear names like Nwibom, Nwideemua, Deesor, Deekor, etc. Also, some villages are identified with the names of their market days.

## **2.9 Traditional market days as tool for Event marketing**

Traditional market days can equally serve as a veritable tool for branding of social and event marketing. Forinstance, the implication of scheduling marriages and other social events on a particular market day should be a course for concern for an event marketer so as to perform

his marketing functions at the right that will not result in conflict or clash of interest or cause any infringement on the custom of the people. Similarly, in Edo and Ogoni tradition there are days reserved for performing marriages, and there are days that are regarded as taboo to fix marriages or any significant event.

In marketing, it is important to be acquainted with the culture and ways of the people (host community) where a business or an organisation is located. Marketing puts into consideration the provision of corporate social responsibilities that guarantee a friendly and serene atmosphere for business to thrive successfully. Proper awareness of the market days of the community playing host to a particular business enterprise will yield great market opportunity and strength to the marketer, creating an enabling environment that guarantees increased business performance, and eliminate business uncertainties and threats in the form of clash of interest among host communities and business owners due to misunderstanding and misconception of idea regarding the people’s culture.

In Yoruba land (Osun state in particular), markets serve as meeting venues for the perpetuation of lineage rights and obligations, and also avenues for the communication and discussion of ideas and social exchange (Omole, Lukman and Baki, 2013). These activities area been observed on particular market days according to long time custom and tradition of the people.

### 3. Methodology

This research relies on primary data generated from field survey, and secondary data obtained from the works of researchers on similar subject matter. The study also developed the following constructs;market days, traditional calendar, festivals, and how they can be used to differentiate a brand (culture, ethnicity, people, etc.). A total of 109 respondents were studied and the analysis was done with Spearman rank correlation coefficient rho with the aid of the SPSS 20.0 software. The result of analysis was used to draw conclusions and on that basis relevant recommendations were made.

### 4. Analysis and discussion of findings

Correlation and multiple regression were conducted to ascertain the association of the variables and also the multiple effect of the constructs generated in the study. The result of the analysis is presented in the below tables:

#### Correlations

**Table 1: Correlations**

		Market days	Traditional calendar	Festivals	Branding
Market days	Pearson Correlation	1	.983**	.937**	.958**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	109	109	109	109
Traditional calendar	Pearson Correlation	.983**	1	.948**	.971**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	109	109	109	109

Festivals	Pearson Correlation	.937**	.948**	1	.965**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	109	109	109	109
Branding	Pearson Correlation	.958**	.971**	.965**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	109	109	109	109

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table shows that the correlation of studied variables is a perfect with 0.958\*\*, 0.971\*\*, 0.965\*\* for market days, traditional calendar and festivals as against the dependent variable-branding.

### Regression

More so, the result of the regression analysis is given below;

**Table 2: Variables Entered/Removed<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	MARKET DAYS, TRADITIONAL CALENDAR, FESTIVALS		Enter

a. Dependent Variable: BRANDING

b. All requested variables entered.

**Table 3: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.983 <sup>a</sup>	.896	.865	.988

a. Predictors: (Constant), MARKET DAYS, TRADITIONAL CALENDAR, FESTIVALS

**Table 4: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2943.065	2	1471.533	1506.755	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	103.522	106	.977		
	Total	3046.587	108			

a. Dependent Variable: BRANDING

b. Predictors: (Constant), MARKET DAYS, TRADITIONAL CALENDAR, FESTIVALS

**Table 5: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.122	.446		.273	.786
	MARKET DAYS	1.382	.084	.929	16.515	.000
	TRADITIONAL CALENDAR	1.143	.109	.805	10.732	.000
	FESTIVALS	1.286	.099	.815	12.056	.000

a. Dependent Variable: BRANDING

Table 3 above shows that the correlation coefficient is 0.983. This implies that a very strong correlation exist between the explanatory variable and the dependent variable. The Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ ) = 0.896. It implies that 89.6% variation in branding strategies is explained by the various traditional market days, traditional calendar, and festivals. Also, the corresponding significant values 0.000 in tables 4 and 5 reveal a high level of significance among studied variables.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

From the result of analysis above we conclude that traditional market days have long been used in the time past and can be used in contemporary marketing as an effective tool for branding and product differentiation. Given the limited literatures available in the current area of study, we recommend that modern day marketing scholars should conduct more research on traditional market days to appreciate its application and relevance in contemporary marketing practice.

### 5.1 Suggestion for further studies

Given the relevance of this study in the enrichment of marketing literature, and for the fact that all areas could not be covered in the present study, we therefore suggest that further

studies be conducted on other ethnicities, Local Government Areas, communities and villages not covered or not deeply explained in the present study.

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