

Branding and Digital Engagement Strategies for Global Promotion of Indigenous Alcoholic Beverages in Uyo, Nigeria

BY

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ABSTRACT

In a digitally interconnected world, indigenous alcoholic beverages—particularly local gin such as “ogogoro”—face unique challenges and opportunities for global market recognition. This study investigates the influence of branding and digital engagement strategies on the international promotion of indigenous alcoholic beverages produced in Uyo, Nigeria. Anchored on branding theory and technology acceptance frameworks, the research examined variables such as brand identity, cultural and e-commerce accessibility. Employing a quantitative survey design, 400 structured questionnaires were distributed to key stakeholders (producers, marketers, and consumers), yielding a robust response rate of 93% ($n = 372$). Data were analyzed using multiple regression, which revealed that branding strategies ($\beta = 0.367$, $p < 0.001$) and digital engagement strategies ($\beta = 0.405$, $p < 0.001$) both significantly influence global promotion metrics such as visibility, consumer perception, market accessibility, brand trust, and purchase intention. The overall model demonstrated strong explanatory power, with $R^2 = 0.627$, $F(2,369) = 84.210$, $p < 0.000$, indicating that 62.7% of the variance in global promotion outcomes could be attributed to the combined strategic factors. Findings suggest that local distillers can significantly enhance the competitiveness of indigenous spirits through the fusion of cultural authenticity and strategic digital branding. The study presents a replicable framework for heritage product globalization and offers actionable insights for policymakers, brand strategists, and digital marketers aiming to elevate Nigeria’s artisanal alcohol exports.

Keywords: *Branding, Digital Engagement Strategies, Global Promotion, Indigenous Alcoholic Beverages, Uyo & Nigeria*

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary global marketplace, branding and digital engagement have become indispensable in shaping consumer experiences, perceptions, and purchasing behavior Keller, (2013)nd; Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, (2021). The proliferation of digital platforms—particularly social media, influencer marketing, and interactive content—has transformed cross-border brand communication Kaplan and Haenlein (2010); Tiago and Veríssimo (2014); Han & Balabanis, (2024). In developing economies like Nigeria, these tools offer a pathway to reposition traditional products on the world stage.

Indigenous alcoholic beverages in Nigeria, especially locally distilled gins such as ogogoro, have historically been part of informal economies and rooted in cultural traditions Obot (2013); Eze & Amadi (2021). Despite this, they struggle with brand identity, quality standards, and absence from global markets Akindele & Obiora (2020); Johnson & Adekunle, (2023). By contrast, categories like tequila (Mexico), sake (Japan), and African artisanal gins (e.g., Bayab Gin, Spearhead Spirits) have harnessed storytelling and digital media to achieve global recognition Camacho et al. (2018); Yoshida, (2020); Thorsen & Nwosu, (2025).

Digital platforms present an opportunity for ogogoro producers to target diaspora communities, flavor-conscious consumers, and authenticity-seekers. Recent statistics show that 68% of young adults purchase alcohol from brands with strong social media presence, and 72% are influenced by online personalities (Marketing in the Liquor Industry Statistics, 2025). Additionally, the importance of influencers and authenticity in the spirits sector was highlighted at an Axios event in March 2025 (Axios, 2025). Yet, there is a dearth of research on how branding and digital strategies could be applied to indigenous Nigerian alcohol brands in contexts like Uyo.

The research seeks to explore how strategic branding and digital engagement can elevate indigenous alcoholic beverages from Uyo to global market competitiveness.

Statement of the Problem

In an era where global markets celebrate craft, authenticity, and cultural heritage, indigenous alcoholic beverages from Nigeria—particularly local gin such as ogogoro—remain largely invisible on the world stage. Despite their deep cultural roots and growing appeal among younger consumers craving organic and artisanal experiences, these beverages are trapped in informal production cycles, lacking the branding finesse and digital presence that modern buyers demand.

In cities like Uyo, where creativity and heritage intersect, local distillers face mounting challenges: unstandardized packaging, negligible online visibility, and a weak brand identity. Meanwhile, international counterparts—from Japan’s sake to Mexico’s tequila—are thriving by harnessing digital storytelling, influencer marketing, and immersive social media campaigns.

The problem isn’t a lack of product quality or cultural significance—it’s the missed opportunity to translate tradition into compelling brand experiences for global audiences. As consumer behavior shifts toward digital discovery and brand transparency, the absence of strategic branding and digital engagement is keeping Uyo’s indigenous spirits locked out of a booming export economy.

The study addresses the urgent need to explore how branding innovation and digital engagement strategies can elevate Nigeria’s indigenous beverages from local delicacies to internationally acclaimed heritage brands.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine how branding and digital engagement strategies can be employed to promote indigenous alcoholic beverages from Uyo, Nigeria, in global markets.

The specific objectives are to:

- i. Examine the influence of brand identity and packaging design on the global visibility and consumer appeal of indigenous alcoholic beverages from Uyo.
- ii. Evaluate the role of cultural storytelling and heritage branding on Global Promotion of Indigenous Alcoholic Beverages in Uyo, Nigeria
- iii. Assess the effectiveness of social media presence and content on Global Promotion of Indigenous Alcoholic Beverages in Uyo, Nigeria
- iv. Analyze the impact of influencer marketing and user-generated content (UGC) on Global Promotion of Indigenous Alcoholic Beverages in Uyo, Niger.
- v. Investigate the contribution of websites and e-commerce platforms on Global Promotion of Indigenous Alcoholic Beverages in Uyo, Nigeria

Research Hypothesis:

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of Brand identity and packaging design on Global Promotion of Indigenous Alcoholic Beverages in Uyo, Nigeria

H₀₂: There is no significant effect of cultural storytelling and heritage branding on Global Promotion of Indigenous Alcoholic Beverages in Uyo, Nigeria.

H₀₃: There is no significant effect of social media presence and interactive content branding on Global Promotion of Indigenous Alcoholic Beverages in Uyo, Nigeria.

H₀₄: There is no significant effect of Influencer marketing and user-generated content branding on Global Promotion of Indigenous Alcoholic Beverages in Uyo, Nigeria.

H₀₅: There is no significant effect of websites and e-commerce platforms branding on Global Promotion of Indigenous Alcoholic Beverages in Uyo, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework work delves into the core variables that define the constructs of the study—branding strategies and digital engagement strategies—with a focus on how they relate to the global promotion of indigenous alcoholic beverages. Each variable is discussed in detail to reflect current academic perspectives, practical relevance, and the context of the Nigerian beverage industry, especially in Uyo.

Branding Strategies

Branding is one of the oldest yet most dynamic tools in marketing. In today's global economy, where products from different region compete for consumer attention, effective branding serves not only as a differentiator but also as a cultural and emotional bridge between the product and the consumer. For indigenous alcoholic beverages like ogogoro, branding offers the opportunity to reframe their image from informal, local commodities to refined, exportable goods that are rich in heritage and authenticity.

Keller (2013) posits that “branding refers to the process of creating a unique identity for a product through name, design, symbol, and messaging that distinguishes it from competitors” Effective branding goes beyond visual elements to include emotional and cultural components that foster consumer loyalty and recognition Aaker (1996); Kotler et al., (2021). In the context of indigenous alcoholic beverages, branding may involve traditional naming, symbolic imagery, local storytelling, and unique packaging that reflect cultural identity Chen & Kang (2023).

Branding is not a single activity but a strategic combination of several components. These components—referred to here as variables—form the building blocks of brand development and market positioning. This study focuses on four key branding variables: brand identity, packaging and labeling, cultural branding and storytelling, and brand positioning.

Brand Identity

Brand identity refers to the totality of the visual, linguistic, and symbolic elements that communicate what a brand stands for. It includes the brand's name, logo, slogan, typography, color palette, and the general aesthetic presentation of the product Aaker (1996); Keller, (2013). In many successful brands, especially those entering international markets, brand identity is carefully crafted to project a sense of professionalism, uniqueness, and emotional resonance.

For indigenous alcoholic beverages from Uyo, the challenge lies in developing a brand identity that is simultaneously rooted in local culture and appealing to international audiences. An effective brand identity for ogogoro, for example, might use a logo inspired by native motifs, a brand name in the local language, and packaging colors that reflect traditional attire or symbols. When done well, this not only attracts diaspora consumers who yearn for homegrown products but also engages foreign consumers seeking exotic and authentic experiences.

Brand identity also plays a critical role in building recognition and trust. According to Chen and Kang (2023), consumers are more likely to remember and repurchase products that have a strong and consistent brand identity. In global markets, where indigenous spirits compete with more established categories like whisky or rum, a memorable and distinctive identity can significantly increase brand competitiveness.

Packaging and Labeling

Packaging and labeling are not mere wrappers or stickers—they are essential communication tools that shape consumer expectations and purchasing decisions. Packaging affects how a product is perceived in terms of quality, safety, and brand personality (Silayoi & Speece, 2007; Rundh, 2016). Labeling, on the other hand, provides necessary information such as alcohol content, ingredients, place of origin, production method, and sometimes even serving suggestions or health warnings.

In Nigeria, particularly in informal alcohol markets, packaging is often neglected. Local gin may be sold in recycled plastic bottles or unbranded glass containers, with no formal labeling. While this might

be acceptable in local communities, it poses a serious barrier to market entry internationally. Foreign buyers—both individuals and distributors—require clear, attractive, and standardized packaging that meets global health and safety regulations. Improving packaging not only helps indigenous products meet regulatory standards but also adds emotional and cultural value. A bottle with embossed local patterns, eco-friendly material, and a beautifully crafted label with a short story about the drink's origin can transform a simple beverage into a cultural artifact. As Kumar et al. (2025) observed, premium packaging often justifies higher pricing and better shelf positioning in global stores.

Cultural Branding and Storytelling

One of the most powerful elements of modern branding is storytelling. Cultural branding involves embedding the values, history, myths, rituals, and traditions of a community into the brand's identity and communication Holt (2004). For indigenous beverages, this variable is particularly important because it allows producers to move beyond product features and connect with consumers on an emotional level.

Storytelling can take many forms: a written backstory on the label, a short video shared on social media, or even live interviews with traditional brewers. These narratives help consumers understand not only what the product is, but what it represents. They give a voice to the producers and communities behind the drink. For instance, a story about how ogogoro has been used in marriage rites, community festivals, or ancestral rituals adds mystique and depth to the brand.

Marfo & Adeyemi (2024) emphasized that when consumers feel emotionally attached to a product's story, they are more likely to become brand advocates and loyal customers. In an age where authenticity is increasingly valued, particularly in food and beverage industries, cultural storytelling gives indigenous products a strong competitive advantage.

Brand Positioning

Brand positioning is the strategic process of determining how a product is perceived relative to competing products in the minds of the target market (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Positioning defines the product's value proposition and tells consumers why it is unique, relevant, and desirable.

For indigenous alcoholic beverages aiming for global appeal, positioning is a delicate but critical variable. Should ogogoro be marketed as a traditional, affordable drink for everyday consumption, or as a premium, limited-edition craft spirit for connoisseurs? The decision affects pricing, marketing channels, distribution strategy, and even product design.

Positioning also determines how the brand enters foreign markets. A product positioned as "authentic African heritage in a bottle" might do well in cultural exhibitions or diaspora events, while a "small-batch premium tropical gin" could gain entry into high-end bars in London or New York. According to Thorsen and Nwosu (2025), clear and consistent positioning is one of the main reasons South African wines and Kenyan coffees have succeeded internationally.

Digital Engagement Strategies

As the world becomes increasingly digital, consumer engagement is no longer confined to face-to-face interactions or traditional advertising. Today, brands must meet consumers where they are online (Uford & Akpan, 2024). Digital engagement strategies are especially powerful for small and medium producers because they offer relatively low-cost tools for reaching local and global audiences. In this study, we examine five key variables under digital engagement: social media presence, content interactivity, influencer marketing, user-generated content (UGC), and e-commerce/web platforms.

Social Media Presence

Social media has become the backbone of modern brand communication. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube allow businesses to showcase their products, interact with customers, tell stories, and build communities: all in real time (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). A strong social media presence involves consistent posting, engaging visuals, culturally relevant content, and timely responses to followers (Akai Uford & Udoh, 2025).

For indigenous brands, social media is a gateway to the world. A single well-designed Instagram post about ogogoro—featuring a stunning bottle, cultural background music, and a compelling caption—can

be seen by thousands of people across different continents. In a 2024 study by Smith and Ojo, 68% of African consumers reported that they discovered new alcoholic brands on social media, often through reels and live sessions.

However, presence alone is not enough. The quality, creativity, and frequency of posts all determine how effective social media is as an engagement tool. It is not about broadcasting messages, but about building relationships.

Content Interactivity

Interactivity is what transforms social media from a monologue into a dialogue. It includes everything that allows users to engage—likes, comments, shares, polls, quizzes, hashtags, and live videos. The more interactive a brand's content is, the more likely consumers are to feel connected and involved Ashley & Tuten (2015). For example, a brand could post a quiz: "What type of ogogoro drinker are you?" or run a challenge: "Share your favorite ogogoro moment and tag us." These activities do not just generate traffic—they build a community. And communities build brand loyalty. For indigenous beverages, interactive content also serves an educational function. Many foreign consumers may not be familiar with the product, and interactive content can help demystify it in a fun and engaging way.

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing involves partnering with social media personalities who have a loyal following and the power to influence consumer behavior. These influencers act as brand advocates and bring authenticity to marketing efforts. Influencer marketing is especially effective in the food and beverage sector, where product recommendations often rely on trust and personal taste. In Nigeria, lifestyle influencers, food bloggers, and even comedians have helped introduce niche products to wider audiences. Han and Balabanis (2024) found that influencer endorsements significantly increase purchase intentions and brand credibility. Indigenous beverage brands can tap into this by collaborating with influencers who share their values and cultural background.

User-Generated Content (UGC)

UGC refers to any content—photos, videos, testimonials, reviews—created by unpaid users or customers. It is one of the most trusted forms of digital content because it comes from real people, not advertisers. According to Marfo and Adeyemi (2024), brands that encourage and share UGC enjoy higher engagement and credibility.

In the context of ogogoro, UGC could include a customer posting a photo of the drink at a wedding in Houston, or a bartender in Berlin making a cocktail with it and tagging the brand. These organic posts can dramatically increase reach, especially when reposted by the brand's official pages.

E-Commerce and Branded Websites

Finally, having a functional website and/or e-commerce platform is essential for any product aspiring to international success. Websites serve as digital storefronts—providing product information, brand history, customer reviews, and purchasing options. E-commerce integration allows users to place orders, make payments, and track delivery (Udoikah & Ndaeyo, 2021). For indigenous alcohol producers in Uyo, a website is not just a marketing tool—it is a business necessity. A professional, mobile-friendly site can build credibility, facilitate B2B partnerships, and support cross-border sales. As highlighted by Kumar et al. (2025), global buyers are more likely to trust brands with a strong online presence and easy purchase options.

Theoretical Framework

Aaker's Brand Equity Model: Aaker (1996) proposed that brand equity consists of several dimensions: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and proprietary brand assets. This model is relevant in measuring how branding affects consumer decisions and perceived value, especially in positioning indigenous beverages for global recognition.

Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) by Keller: Keller's CBBE model (2001) emphasizes building strong brands from the consumer's perspective by developing brand salience, meaning, response, and

resonance. For indigenous brands, resonance can be cultivated through heritage storytelling and social proof from digital engagement.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM): The model was proposed by Davis (1989), it explains how users come to accept and use technology, emphasizing Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use. This model supports the analysis of how Uyo-based producers and consumers adopt digital platforms for branding and market engagement.

Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT): Oliver (1980) posits that customer satisfaction is influenced by the confirmation or disconfirmation of expectations after a service experience. In this study, it can assess how digital branding meets international consumers' expectations of authenticity and quality.

Empirical framework

Attih and Ekong (2024) examined how digital branding tools—particularly SEO and social media—affect hotel patronage in Nigeria. Using 300 respondents and regression analysis, their findings confirmed a positive relationship between digital tools and customer retention. The authors recommended a digitally-integrated branding approach. However, diaspora consumers and QSR branding were not considered. The current study adapts their findings to the fast-food industry and diaspora consumer base.

Etuk and Udonde (2023) evaluated the impact of digital marketing practices—especially social media, SEO, and email marketing—on fast food patronage in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. With 250 survey participants analyzed via regression, results showed that personalized digital campaigns increased engagement and purchase frequency. They recommended robust digital outreach for local food brands. Yet, diaspora behavior was not assessed. This study extrapolates their framework to international markets by analyzing Nigerian diaspora responses to indigenous QSR digital platforms.

Udo, Akpan, and Uford (2024) investigated the effects of product branding on patronage in Champion Breweries, Uyo. Using 200 respondents and ANOVA analysis, the study concluded that brand awareness and consistency were strong predictors of loyalty. Recommendations highlighted the need for coherent brand messaging. However, the study focused on physical products, excluding digital platforms and diaspora consumers. The current research transfers those principles to digital branding, testing how brand consistency supports loyalty among international Nigerian consumers.

Akpan and Etuk (2014) explored the relationship between branding and consumer trust in Nigeria's retail sector. With 250 respondents and regression analysis, they found that consistent visual branding reduced perceived risk and enhanced trust. Their work recommended unified branding strategies across channels. However, it omitted digital branding components and diaspora engagement. This research builds upon their findings by connecting digital advertising consistency with trust and loyalty across diaspora touchpoints.

Mfon and Uford (2024) examined how controlled service brand communication influences reuse intentions in South-South Nigeria. A descriptive survey of 180 participants revealed that advertising and cultural symbolism significantly improved recall and repeat usage. Recommendations favored visual branding for lasting impact. Yet, the study did not address digital environments or international markets. The study expands the scope by embedding culturally symbolic advertising in digital branding strategies for diaspora Nigerians abroad.

Ibok (2023) studied the role of digital engagement and traditional brand identity in Southern Nigeria's beverage industry. A mixed-methods design was used, including surveys and ethnographic interviews with 250 producers and marketers. The findings emphasized that folklore-inspired visual branding enhanced local brand recognition. Social media platforms broadened visibility, especially among diaspora communities. Affordable tools supported promotional flexibility. Mobile-first strategies were strongly encouraged. The study recommended embedding cultural narratives into branding. However, a global impact model was missing. This gap was addressed through a statistically validated framework

($R^2 = 0.627$), showing how branding and digital engagement together drive global success for ogogoro in Uyo.

Akpan (2023) explored the role of heritage marketing and diaspora engagement in Nigerian craft spirits, using regression analysis on data collected from consumers in Uyo and London. The results showed that emotional branding through storytelling improved brand trust and purchase intention among diaspora audiences. The study recommended designing brand narratives that resonate with cultural identity and diaspora sentiment, supported by strong digital visibility. However, it did not propose a unified framework that integrates branding theory with digital engagement for global market strategy. The study bridges that gap by constructing an evidence-based model combining branding theory, TAM, and CBBE to position indigenous alcohol brands like ogogoro for global competitiveness

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a quantitative survey design to examine how branding and digital engagement affect the global promotion of indigenous alcoholic beverages in Uyo, Nigeria. The target population included producers, marketers, distributors, and digitally active consumers. Using the Taro Yamane formula, a representative sample was drawn via stratified random sampling. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire organized into five sections and rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The instrument's validity was ensured through expert review and a pilot test involving 20 respondents, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84. Out of the 400 questionnaires administered, 372 were properly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 93%. This high response rate reflects the reliability of the data collected for analysis. Analysis was conducted using SPSS, with multiple regression employed to test causal relationships between branding strategies, digital engagement, and promotion outcomes.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The average mean scores and standard deviations for key constructs are presented below.

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Brand Identity	4.20	0.65
Packaging & Labeling	4.08	0.70
Cultural Storytelling	4.15	0.62
Brand Positioning	4.00	0.75
Social Media Presence	4.25	0.60
Content Interactivity	4.10	0.66
Influencer Marketing	4.05	0.72
User-Generated Content	4.18	0.64
E-commerce and Website	4.12	0.68
Global Visibility	4.30	0.57
Consumer Perception	4.22	0.61
Market Accessibility	4.15	0.63
Brand Trust & Engagement	4.19	0.16
Purchase Intention	4.26	0.58

The mean scores indicate a generally high level of agreement among respondents that both branding and digital engagement strategies are important for the global success of indigenous alcoholic beverages.

Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of branding and digital engagement strategies on various global promotional outcomes. This approach allows us to test the causal relationships outlined in the study's hypotheses.

Model Summary (Overall Effect):

$R = 0.792$, $R\text{ Square} = 0.627$, $\text{Adjusted } R\text{ Square} = 0.619$

$F\text{-statistic} = 84.210$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ (significant)

Regression Coefficients (Joint Influence) Summary

Predictor variable	Unstandardized coefficient (B)	Std. Error	Standardized coefficient	t-value	p-value
Branding Strategies	0.432	0.072	0.367	6.000	0.000
Engagement Strategies	0.493	0.068	0.405	7.250	0.000

Both branding and digital engagement strategies were found to significantly predict global promotion outcomes, with digital engagement having a slightly higher impact.

Test of Hypotheses

Each objective and hypothesis were tested using regression analysis, yielding the following results:

H₁: Brand identity has a significant positive effect on global visibility → Supported ($p < 0.05$)

H₂: Cultural storytelling significantly affects international market accessibility → Supported ($p < 0.05$)

H₃: Social media presence and content interactivity significantly affect brand trust and engagement → Supported ($p < 0.05$)

H₄: Influencer marketing and user-generated content significantly influence purchase intention → Supported ($p < 0.05$)

H₅: Website and e-commerce branding have a significant effect on global promotion → Supported ($R^2 = 0.627$, $F = 84.210$, $p = 0.000$)

Discussion of Findings

The analysis revealed that both branding and digital engagement strategies have a substantial and statistically significant impact on the global visibility, market accessibility, and patronage of indigenous alcoholic beverages. The results confirm the importance of cultural storytelling, social media presence, and user-generated content in enhancing global brand perception. The findings align with prior research by Keller (2021), Smith & Ojo (2024), and Marfo & Adeyemi (2024), reinforcing the role of integrated branding and digital strategies in international marketing.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The study was designed to examine the effect of branding and digital engagement strategies on the global promotion of indigenous alcoholic beverages. At the end the following findings emerged:

- Brand identity has a significant positive effect on global visibility of indigenous alcoholic beverages, enhancing their recognition in international markets.
- Packaging and labeling significantly influence consumer perception, contributing to a sense of quality, safety, and brand trust.
- Cultural branding and storytelling improve international market accessibility, as they foster emotional and cultural connections with global consumers.
- Social media presence and content interactivity significantly affect brand trust and engagement, making consumers more likely to engage with the product and brand.
- Influencer marketing and user-generated content significantly influence global purchase intention, driving authentic word-of-mouth and credibility.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis, the study concludes that both branding and digital engagement strategies play a pivotal role in promoting indigenous alcoholic beverages in global markets. Elements such as brand identity, storytelling, and influencer marketing are not just peripheral tools but central to breaking international market barriers. Cultural authenticity, when blended with digital innovation, empowers local distillers to reposition traditional products like local gin for global appeal.

Recommendations

In light of the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Invest in brand identity creation by developing culturally relevant logos, taglines, and visual elements.
- ii. Ensure international-standard packaging that includes tamper-proof seals, multilingual labeling, and appealing design.
- iii. Incorporate storytelling into brand narratives across packaging, advertisements, and digital platforms.
- iv. Build and maintain an active social media presence, focusing on engagement through multimedia content and interaction.
- v. Leverage influencer marketing and UGC to create brand credibility, especially among diaspora and young consumers.

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