

DIGITAL MEDIA AND CONTEXTUAL COMMUNICATION CUES IN AFRO-CAROLS: IMPLICATIONS FOR IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN AFRICA

By

Titilayo Remilekun Osuagwu, Ph.D.
Department Of Broadcasting
Faculty of Communication & Media Studies
University Of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The proliferation of various digital media types aids the re-contextualisation of familiar communication genres. One of the affordances of the new communication ecology is evident in the popular Christian religious songs often sung during Christmas and popularly called Carol Songs. The question of whether Afro-carols have helped in furthering the propagation of cultural ideas and identity is important considering the increase of such genres on the continent. This study leveraged Hall's Contextual Theory to examine respondents' preferred versions of Carol Songs and how the contextual cues in African carol songs instil cultural consciousness. Using mixed methods such as ethnographic observation and interviews in Nigeria and Cameroon, findings showed that Afro-carols were the most preferred Carol Songs among Africans and such Carol genre was mostly accessed via various digital platforms like YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok and various music streaming platforms. The use of cues that blend Christianity and traditional heritage as evident setting, language, gestures, artefacts, local delicacies, and attires, often helps to indigenise carol songs and promote a sense of cultural belonging and identity. This study recommends the need for more adaptations of Westernised Carol songs into indigenous languages in Africa to counter the hegemonic tendencies of the Western genre and pave the way for more effective engagements for cultural promotion.

KEYWORDS: Africanised Carol Songs, contextual communication, digital media, decolonisation

INTRODUCTION

Christmas carol or *nuel* in French is a song on the theme of Christmas usually sung during the period surrounding the Christmas holiday or on Christmas day itself. They are also songs that pertain to the religious and circular celebration of the Christmas holidays. They constitute a ubiquitous aspect of society and have been one of the most popular practices that have lasted in the history of mankind as they are being passed down from one generation to the other via oral tradition (Muscato, 2023, Specter, 2017; Dancesschissel, 2016) and now are being aided by digital technology.

According to Muscato (2023), Carols were first sung in Europe thousands of years ago but were traditionally pagan songs sung at sunrise celebrations during the winter solstice, as people danced around stone circles. The word carol originated from the old French word 'carole', which meant a popular circle dance accompanied by singing. Carols used to be written and sung during all four seasons. Thus, there used to be May carols, harvest carols, and Easter carols, but it is only the Christmas variant that has outlived the rest.

The ancient Roman pagan festival of Saturnalia, which honoured the agricultural god

Saturn, took place near the winter solstice. Due to when this holiday occurred, Saturnalia celebrations are said to be the source of many of the traditions we now associate with Christmas, such as wreaths, candles, feasting and gift-giving. Early Christianity turned the pagan solstice tradition into a celebration for Christmas and gave people Christian songs to sing in Latin.

Carols in English first appeared in a 1426 work of John Awdlay, a Shropshire chaplain, who listed twenty-five 'caroles of Cristemas', probably sung by groups of 'wassailers', who went from house to house. In 1947 England, during the reign of Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans, the celebration of Christmas and singing carols was stopped as it was perceived as a pagan festival.

However, since their revival, carols have constituted one of the popular entertainment genres that are significantly contributing to the realisation of sustainable development goals. Especially the last goal that pertains to partnership. According to Cooper (2008), although Christmas carol has a long history, the scope of Christmas carol in its contemporary form has been broadened to include Christmas hymns and other types of songs. Today's Christmas carols have diverse origins as reflected in their geography and chronology. In the views of Fancy & Leena ()carols have become secular like they were in their old days.

Afro-carols in context

The kind of diversity inherent in contemporary carols has given birth to Afrocarols as evident in every African society. The concept of Afrocarol was derived from the condensation of the first three letters in the word "Africa" and the word "carols."

In the context of this study, the term Afrocarol is used to depict carols in indigenous languages and dialects of Africa. More specifically, it also refers to the adaptation of age-long Christmas carol songs into African language and traditions. It means giving an African touch to classic or "immortal" carol songs. This definition contrasts with the African carols as Christmas songs that are composed locally and produced locally. In the contemporary evolution of African carols, both genres coexist.

Musicologist have established that music is vital to identity negotiation (Gottlieb & Schmidt, 2021), however, the genre of Afrocarols are evolving in Africa that no scholarship is paying little or no attention to. For instance, in Nigeria and Cameroon, classics like *Silent Night*, *Long Time Ago in Bethlehem*, *Mary Boy Child Jesus Christ*, *Joy to the World* and *Go Tell it All the Mountains* and *The Twelve Days of Christmas* have all been adapted and have their AfroNigerian and Afro Cameroonian renditions. In Cameroon, there was once a competition challenge about adapting carol classics into Afro Cameroonian version Known as "Christmas Carolling" where circular musicians adapt known classics that are indicative of Christmas into African style. In Nigeria, each tribe now has its rendition of classics including pidgin. *Twelve Days of Christmas* Jingle done by Maggi in 2019 is one to be remembered among Nigerians in a long time. It became popular on various platforms in Nigeria. Also *Christmas True Love* by Ubong Ikpe Acapela just like the Maggi variant showcased various cuisines in Akwa Ibom, a tribe in Nigeria. The Maggi *12 Days of Christmas* jingle became popular on various social media in 2019 and people fell in love with it and said it was better than the original *Twelve Days*. It trended on YouTube, Ticktock and radio. Relatable Nigerian delicacies were used as the twelve gifts. The delicacies included spicy suya, moimoi, eforiro, party Jolof, fufu with egusi, nkwoobi and snails among others.

Thus, investigating the contextual cues in Afro carols and how they aid the understanding of the African culture of self and collective identity and align with the global goal of the partnership with other cultures to realise other goals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and African Unions goals that promise to leave no one behind through inclusivity.

Statement of the Problem

Carols are a popular genre because they belong to the world's popular culture. Despite their ubiquitous nature as enhanced by the digital ecosystem, the emergence of carols in Indigenous languages in Africa has not been extensively studied to understand the extent to which they manifest cultural identity. Such a paucity of research in this area serves as motivation for seeking an insight into the significance of Afrocarols in two African countries.

In scholarship, there is a lamentation about how to tackle the challenge of addressing the lack of enough indigenous cultural offerings of African origin. This often results in Africans consuming westernised content ultimately leading to the perpetuation of hegemonic tendencies. (See Osuagwu, 2022, Osuagwu, 2010). Such concern about projecting traditional practices that engender cultural identity has birthed this research.

The need for this research is urgent to address the claim of cultural domination and identity erosion by emerging societies as caused by the infiltration of local cultures by foreign cultures through colonialism and neocolonialism. The study, therefore, seeks to critically examine the situation and seek an answer to this poser: How are Afro carols serving the ideals of furthering indigenous/cultural ideas and identity? In other words, how do people understand Afro-Carols as the manifestations of Afro-cultural identity?

Aim and objectives

The major aim of this study is to find out the extent to which Afro-carols enhance the propagation of cultural ideas and identity in Africa. The specific objectives are as follows: To

- 1) establish the carol song preferences among residents in Nigeria and Cameroon
- 2) find out the most prevalent outlet for accessing Afro-carols in Nigeria and Cameroon
- 3) ascertain Nigerians' and Cameroonians' lyric themes of Afro carols.
- 4) determine the communication cues that enhance the indigenisation of Afro-carols in Nigeria and Cameroon.
- 5) determine the extent to which Afro-carols influence identity creation among Nigerians and Cameroonians.

Research questions

Based on the problem and objectives of the research, the following research questions were formed:

- 1) What carol songs are most preferred among residents in Nigeria and Cameroon?
- 2) What are the most prevalent outlets for accessing Afro-Carols in Nigeria and Cameroon?
- 3) What are Nigerians' and Cameroonians' lyrical themes of Afro carols?
- 4) What communication cues enhance the indigenisation of Afro-carols in Nigeria and Cameroon?

- 5) To what extent do Afro-Carols influence identity creation among Nigerians and Cameroonians?

Theoretical framework

Since Afro-carols fall within intercultural communication, the contextual communication cues theory underpins this study. Edward T. Hall propounded the contextual communication cues theory (Ranos, 2014). This theory rests on the importance of verbal and non-verbal signals in meaning conveyance within communication. Persons who are familiar with these cues have their interpretative skills enhanced, resulting in effective interactions in diverse contexts. Thus, in multicultural settings where interpretations are diverse, owing to cultural backgrounds, knowing the nuances of communication cues is essential.

More so, Adair et al., (2015) affirmed that context in communication means the way of giving meaning to communication. The success or effectiveness of every communication endeavour depends on context. Essential nuances that can influence context include the culture associated with the communicators, physical location and characteristics, relationships between communicators and the expected behaviour based on past attitudes. Communication context is the plethora of nonverbal, relational, spatial, and temporal cues that can be drawn upon to convey and understand meaning.

According to Ranos (2014), Hall's theory argues that high-context cultures often exhibit less direct verbal and nonverbal communication, while low-context culture, does the opposite and direct verbal communication needs to understand a message. They rely heavily on explicit verbal skills. Context is the external situation or environment that resolves ambiguities. Similarly, Adair et al (2015) found that "individuals with stronger interdependent self-construal are more likely to pay attention to and rely on all forms of communication context to convey meaning. Our findings also show that individuals who are more highly context-dependent communicators have higher cultural intelligence."

Cardon (2008) has criticised the contextual theory for lacking empirical backing as many of the context categories had not been researched enough to arrive at any logical conclusion. The criticism has not stopped the theory's applicability in intercultural communication studies. Cameroon and Nigeria are both high-context cultures that recognise cultural norms, values, history and relationships in meaning-making and those are reflected in the adaptations of classic carols. Classical carols can be said to belong to low-context cultures which are characterised by straight forwarded, frankness, explicit, direct and elaborate communication (Adair, et al., 2015).

Lyrical themes of Afro carols

Afro-carols are gaining significant acceptance in global Christian music because of their community-based themes. Hence, Afro carols are rich in lyrical themes as they reflect cultural heritage (leverage specific cultural context to express unique experiences, for example, 12 Days of Christmas showcasing culinary skills in diverse African culture (s) and reinforcing cultural pride and identity). The next theme often explored in Afro carols is spirituality (carols that call to witness the miracle of Christ's birth). The themes of communal values (express the joy of togetherness and the importance of community bonding). Other themes include Joy amid struggle (this is about showing kindness to the less privileged) nature and environment (communicates how nature and environment shape the type of Christmas in Africa through the imagery of sun to contrast snow). All these themes always intersect with elements of joy, struggle, and the celebration of life, and

often reflect the spirit of the Christmas season in Africa affirming the rich cultural experiences of the African people (Mbatha, 2024; thepromota.com, n.d).

Music and Identity Construction

Identity refers to an individual's awareness of self and how it shapes one's interaction with others in the social milieu (Lynn-Ee Ho, 2017; Ścigaj, 2021). It is a key attempt at seeking recognition of a person and others. Although identity has been an age-long phenomenon in diverse scholarly endeavours, it has become a more important element of current social relations and processes. According to Lynn-Ee Ho, (2017), people make identity claims to challenge a system of domination or reinforce citizenship and navigate post-colonial spaces. Also, Ścigaj (2021) affirmed that Identity construction or development is often a difficult task for every society that has suffered colonisation. Thus, such societies are constantly striving to counter the discriminatory effects of imperialism and neocolonialism.

One of how people reinforce their identity is through songs (Gottlieb & Schmidt, 2021; McDonald, 2008). In songs, people, especially people who are migrants or people who have been victims of colonial experience sustain the vitality of their traditional values and preserve their cultural identity (Aldoughli, 2018; Lehlohonolo & Zulu, 2014; Yuliantari, 2020).) Aldoughli (2018) has argued that songs can be used deliberately to influence the perception of national belonging and identity. Lehlohonolo & Zulu (2014) found the construction of collective and national identities in Basotho songs as they are used to narrate "associations and social relationships relating to shared locations, language and culture." Similarly, the study by Ścigaj (2021) demonstrated how songs in dialects can help propagate cultural identity at the meso, micro and macro levels. Hence, the influence of technology can be a propeller or an inhibitor of the diffusion of songs and cultural identity. Still, Collinson (2009) found that songs are vital in creating a football fan identity, in the same vein, Armstrong & Grieder argue that songs serve as a tool for self-identity.

Going by the assertion of Fancy & Leena () that carols have always had social significance from their secular origin to the religious, some scholars have concentrated on finding the cultural relevance of music in general, while some have dwelt on carols specifically (e.g. Ashton, 1994; Rice, 2010; Herbert et al., 2012) Ashton (1994) demonstrated the symbiotic relationship between a people's tradition, popular music and the vernacular performance of Christmas carols. As shown in that study about the carolling tradition of South Yorkshire and North Derbyshire, English carols are rooted in English folk music with features like a cappella, solo and monodic. As the author argued, the study provides insights into the stability, diversity and stability of the tradition of visitation customs and form of ritual begging.

Bennett (2017) analysed the top 200 UK Spotify song streams from the week of December 25th 2016, to identify the songs people played at home in the festive season. Of these 200 songs, 78 were Christmas or Holiday related out of the 200 songs analysed. The study also found nine major themes from the 78 songs. The themes include, home, love, lost love, party, snow, Santa and religiosity, with the most commonly occurring words as snow, party, tree, Santa, love, home and cold.

Hebert et al., (2012) examined the characteristics of Finnish *joulumusiikki* (Christmas music). Using ethnographic observations and interviews conducted at five prominent Christmas

music venues in the capital city of Helsinki. Findings established that the events were understood as rituals that both maintained traditions and mediated the transformations of contemporary Finnish societal ideals as seen as both expressions and constructions of 'Finnishness' as an important social tradition that continues to evolve and transform. In the same vein Hargreaves, W. & Forbes, M. (2022) noted that carols serve as a means of empowerment and resilience as demonstrated by the survivors of the Eastern Airline Flight 401 crash in Florida who sang carol songs for spiritual upliftment while awaiting evacuation from the wreckage.

In general, some individuals have positive perspectives about carols, little wonder that Liberaton (2015) argues that listening to sad Christmas songs purges people of negative emotions. In contrast, some other people have reservations about carols as they see them as having a negative influence. In this regard, Spector (2017) argues that psychologists have found that constant exposure to Christmas music can have debilitating effects on people's mental health. They can bring back sad memories to some people. He advised listeners to exercise control on how and when they hear Christmas music.

With the help of digital technologies, carols inundate the spaces. Some people take familiar carols and add their variations. According to Spector (2017) "keep in mind also that Western music, as Gentry points out," was "designed to elicit emotional responses." There are some pretty corny Christmas songs (sorry, Jingle Bells), but even if you hate them, you must admit that songs like Silent Night and Carol of the Bells are ridiculously poignant. Perhaps that's another reason these tunes can be so maddening: How many times can we feel this intense emotional pressure before we beg for it to stop? Well, we've got the whole holiday season to find out."

Francis of Assisi encouraged Christmas songs in native languages. In 1223, Assisi's nativity plays in Italy had people sing songs or 'canticles' that told the Christian nativity story. Sometimes the choruses of these new carols were in Latin, but normally they were in a regional language that the people watching could understand and join in. The new carols spread to France, Spain, Germany and other European countries. These were like a dance in a circle with linked hands and everybody singing the songs.

Hargreaves & Forbes (2022) assert that the Christmas tradition of singing together to feel uplifted has existed for centuries. English historian Professor Ronald Hutton traced the origins of carolling to the followers of Saint Francis of Assisi in the 15th century. Prompted by a need to raise spirits during long, bleak winter months, these friars sang the first Christmas carols while holding hands and dancing in a circle.

According to Hargreaves & Forbes (2022) beyond the Christmas tree, one of the vital benefits of carols is belonging and sharing through songs. They noted thus, "When you sing carols together, what you really get for Christmas isn't just more socks or the latest techno gadget – it's the real gift of joyful human connection."

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey was deployed as the research design for this study. According to Wimmer and Dominic (1997), "a descriptive survey attempts to picture or document current conditions or attitudes- that is to describe what exists at the moment" (p.137). In this research, quantitative and qualitative approaches were used, making it mixed-methods research.

An online questionnaire was used to collect data from Nigerian and Cameroonian respondents for the quantitative. For the quantitative aspect, ethnographic observation and focus group interviews were conducted in Nigeria and Cameroon. The essence of the qualitative method was to dive in and deeply explore how carols are used to communicate culture on social media.

The study’s population comprised Nigerian and Cameroonian adults, purposively selected based on age and availability. Thematic analysis was used to analyse focus group data. Thematic analysis allows a researcher to extract a list of themes that build a pattern of meanings across the set allowing a community of voices to be heard (Aluko, 2017; Meribe & Oke, 2017).

Two focus group sessions were held in each of the countries to corroborate the questionnaire data. Each focus group session lasted forty-five minutes and had 9 participants each. The snowball technique was used to recruit participants for the focus group sessions. Two research assistants were used for the sessions in Cameroon, while the author conducted the sessions in Nigeria.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The demographic analysis of respondents showed that the majority of respondents were adults. Their educational qualifications reflected experiences that included medicine, law, journalism, philosophy, and business. The distribution by country location indicated that more Nigerians 456 responded to the online questionnaire while 364 respondents were from Cameroon.

Research Objective 1: Establish the carol song preferences among residents in select African countries.

Table 1: Carol song preferences among Nigeria and Cameroon Residents.

Country	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Nigeria	Afro-carols	306	37%
Cameroon	Afro-carols	204	24%
Nigeria	Classical carols	150	18%
Cameroon	Classical carols	160	16%
Total		820	100%

The table above shows that the majority of respondents in the select countries preferred AfroCarols to classical carols as 37% and 34% from Nigeria and Cameroon respectively stated their preferences for carol songs to be Afro carols. The focus group result corroborated the questionnaire data as the majority of respondents in the focus group sessions in Nigeria and Cameroon said they liked Afro carols. For instance, an FGD participant in Nigeria said, “I love traditional carols because they are relatable. They bring you classical tunes in African language and costumes.” In Cameroon, a participant also asserted that: “I like the adaptations of Classical carol songs in African tune. They bring African touch to classics.” Still, a participant in Cameroon said “I love how singers garnish Afro-carols with adlibs like helllele or yeyyeee. Sometimes, they wrap in African language.”

Research Objective 2: Find out the most prevalent outlet for accessing Afro-carols in select African countries.

Table 2: Outlets for Accessing Afrocarols in Select African Countries

Country	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Nigeria	Social Media	382	47%
Cameroon	Social Media	215	26%
Nigeria	Mainstream Media	69	8%
Cameroon	Mainstream Media	132	16%
Nigeria	Interpersonal Channels	5	1%
Cameroon	Interpersonal Channels	17	2%
Total		820	100%

There is an indication of social media as the most prominent outlet for accessing Afrocarols; 47% and 26% respectively attested; 8% and 16% respectively said they accessed carols via mainstream media, while only 3% accessed Afrocarols via interpersonal channels. The focus group data in both countries support this result. In Nigeria a participant said “I have watched Afrocarols on WhatsApp, and Youtube in Cameroonian respondent also said, ticktock and Facebook. Many

classical tunes like Silent Night and Days of Christmas have been translated into different Nigerian languages like Ibibio and Yoruba.”

Findings showed that Afro-carols were the most preferred Carol Songs among Africans, such Carol genre was mostly accessed via various digital platforms like YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, TickTok and various music streaming platforms. The use of cues that range from setting, language, gestures, artefacts, local delicacies, and clothes, often helps to indigenise carol songs and promote a sense of cultural belonging and identity. This study recommends the need for more adaptations of Westernised Carol songs into indigenous languages in Africa to counter the hegemonic tendencies of the Western genre and pave the way for more effective engagements for cultural promotion.

Research Objective 3: Ascertain Nigerians’ and Cameroonians’ perceived lyric themes of Afrocarols.

Table 3: Prominent lyrical themes of Afro-carols and classical carols.

Country	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Nigeria	Cultural heritage	180	22%
Cameroon	Cultural heritage	130	16%
Nigeria	Communality	100	12%
Cameroon	Communality	94	11%
Nigeria	Spirituality	85	10%
Cameroon	Spirituality	68	8%
Nigeria	Joy/Celebration	45	6%
Cameroon	Joy/Celebration	35	4%
Nigeria	Seasonal experience/environment	32	5%

Cameroon	Seasonal experience/environment	27	3%
Nigeria	Travel	14	2%
Cameroon	Travel	10	1%
Total	-	820	100%

The table above provided the answer to research objective three which sought to know the dominant lyric themes of Afro-carols. The table has shown that the theme of cultural heritage which constitutes 22% and 16% respectively, dominates the rest of the themes which include joy/celebration, spirituality seasonal experience and travel. This finding corroborates the ethnographic observation which preceded the study and the focus group sessions held. It was observed that, in three different African renditions of the classic, “The Twelve Days of Christmas” indigenous items were used in place of the twelve gifts in the classic rendition. More prominent is the utilisation of the cuisines in Africa. Also, African drums and attires were showcased. In the focus group session, a woman participant in Nigeria said, that the African renditions of the Twelve Days of Christmas are more interesting than the real ones. I watched them daily on YouTube and Ticktock even when it was not Christmas. A male respondent in Cameroon also said, “Africans are communicating our culture through carols. The Afro-carol that I watched recently on Ticktock had the singers wear shoes done with rafia, those are African sandals that predate colonialism.”

Consequently, the finding above agrees with Hall’s contextual cues theory which explains context as preconditions of verbal and nonverbal conditions for effective communication. Moreso, this finding supports Herbert et al., the assertion that carols are used to maintain tradition and construct self-identity. Also, McDonald (2008) asserted that people maintained the vitality of their identities through songs.

Research objective 4: Determine the contextual communication cues that enhance the indigenisation of Afro-carols in Nigeria and Cameroon.

Table 4: Contextual cues that enhance indigenisation

Country	Variable	frequency	Percentage
Nigeria	A blend of Christian and traditional heritage like language,	196	24%

	setting, and attires among others		
Cameroon	A blend of Christian and traditional heritage like language, setting, and attires among others	142	17%
Nigeria	Traditional African Rhythms/instruments	150	19%
Cameroon	Traditional African Rhythms/instruments	129	16%
Nigeria	Call and response pattern of singing	60	7%
Cameroon		53	6%
Nigeria	Storytelling	50	6%
Cameroon		40	5%
Total		820	100%

Objective four was concerned with determining the contextual communication cues that often enhance the indigenisation of Afro-carols. Table 4 shows that the blend of Christian and traditional heritage like language, setting, and attires among others are the contextual communication cues that often enhance the indigenisation of Afro-carols in Nigeria and Cameroon. Besides the survey, the qualitative data also supports this finding. The majority of the discussants in the two countries said Afro-Carols were rich in adding traditional flavour to Christian carols. “I like Afro carols because of the rich African costumes I see.” Another discussant in Nigeria said “I like how carols are garnished with the pidgin language. I love things like helelele in Africa.” This finding supports Lehlohonolo & Zulu’s (2014) study which found the construction of collective and national identities in Basotho songs as they are used to narrate “associations and social relationships relating to shared locations, language and culture.” Also, Ścigaj (2021)

demonstrated how songs in dialects can help propagate cultural identity at the meso, micro and macro levels.

Research objective 5: Determine the extent to which Afrocarols influence self and collective identity consciousness among Nigerians and Cameroonians.

The last objective was curious to know the extent to which Afrocarols influence self and collective identity consciousness among Nigerians and Cameroonians.

Table 5: Extent of influence of Afrocarols on self and collective identity

Country	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Nigeria	Very high extent	180	22%
Cameroon	Very high extent	151	18%
Nigeria	High	150	18%
Cameroon	High	115	15%
Nigeria	Moderate	80	10%
Cameroon	Moderate	72	9%
Nigeria	Low	32	4%
Cameroon	Low	20	2%
Nigeria	Very low extent	12	1%
Cameroon	Very low extent	8	1%
Total		820	100%

Table 5 showed that Afro-carols had influenced self and collective identity consciousness among Nigerians and Cameroonians to a very extent; 22% and 18% of the respondents attested to this. The focus group sessions affirmed this finding. As observed before the study, The “Twelve Days of Christmas” by various African artists had various native delicacies that Africans can relate to. In its year of release, the song served as a menu list to some Africans. In the focus group session in Cameroon, a woman said, now we have African Christmas where we talk about sunrise instead of snow or white Christmas. African Christmas is more enjoyable with all its flavours. I am proud to be an African.” Another man in the focus group in Nigeria puts it thus, “African Christmas carols have come to stay. It is thrilling to have carols where singers wear traditional native attires, uses native drums like gangan (a kind of drum in Africa) and dance in the African way.” This implies that Afro-carols are instilling and spreading identity consciousness as African people are prouder of their identities as it is being put in the global space through social media. This finding

corresponds to the findings of Aldoughli (2018) and Lehlohonolo & Zulu about the use of songs to influence the perception of national identity. Similarly, Seigaj (2021) demonstrated the role of songs in dialect and the propagation of cultural identity. In all, the finding underscores Osuagwu's (2020) finding that Indigenous knowledge has a special role to play in societal development.

LIMITATIONS

The study had some limitations. The study did not investigate a particular Afro-carol to empirically demonstrate its relevance to identity consciousness in Africa. To provide conclusive evidence, further studies can enrich the findings of this study through the use of a specific Afro carol.

Second, this study used self-reporting to demonstrate the influence of Afro-carols on cultural identity. An experimental or longitudinal study will need to be carried out to properly claim influence. This is because the survey does not properly demonstrate causality or relationship.

Finally, this study did not consider age about the influence of Afro-carols on cultural identity. In this study, all adults were considered to be in in the same age demography. Future studies can examine younger adults and older adults to establish a correlation of age with regard to Afro carols and cultural identity consciousness.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the perspectives of adults in Nigeria and Cameroon on Afro-carols and their implications for identity consciousness. Based on the findings above, it is affirmed that Afro-carols have a lot of significance that borders on identity construction and reinforcement among Africans. This is because of their preference among Africans, their proliferation on social media and the communication cues used in the genre. The communication cues that include the use of local languages, African musical style and combination of classic carol lyrics with local verbal and non-verbal expressions often instil cultural identity and pride in global sphere. This implies that Afro-carols has evolved as a genre that has transcended religious practice to having social values of reinforcement communality and identity consciousness among Africans.

Besides, the contextual communication cues theory has found relevance in this study. The study has demonstrated the significance of context in meaning transference and communication effectiveness. Nigeria and Cameroon are high-context cultures that understand the significance of using context to communicate carols songs bearing in mind the needs of the audiences who are non-western.

Finally, this research concluded that the themes of cultural heritage, communal living, seasonal experiences as well as travel are commonly found in Afro carols. These themes are broader in scope than their classic counterparts that dwell only on the joy of the birth of Chris.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Because of the preference of Africans for Afro carols, there is a need for more carols that are not only variants of Western carols but carols that are composed mainly of Africans. Although such carols exist scantily, they are not well appreciated and accepted like the ones that are variants of the classics.
2. More Afro-carol songs should be distributed via social media since this study has found them as the most prevalent outlet of dissemination. In this regard, the government should recognise the social significance of carols and improve power generation and low internet tariffs.
3. The scope of the lyrical themes should go beyond cultural heritage, the joy of the birth of Christ, seasonal experiences and travel. More themes on how to imbibe the attributes of

Christ, the reason for the season, should be added. If done, this may help in taming the menace of corruption, internet fraud, armed robbery and other vices.

4. Also, communication cues should adhere totally to the African traditional context in terms of setting, attires, and language/dialects in other to properly enhance the indigenisation of Afro-carols. How can you have an Afro-carol on a stage that is not dressed in African costumes? Some singers of Afro-Carols still wear the traditional Western Santa attire. This is wrong.
5. Finally, since Afro-carols are increasingly influencing identity consciousness among Africans as demonstrated by the study, there is a need for more empirical research using various methodologies to validate the claim of influence.

REFERENCES

- Aldoughli, R. (2018). The symbolic construction of national identity and belonging in Syrian nationalist songs (from 1970 to 2007). *Contemporary Levant*.
- Aluko, Y. (2017). Interviewing. In Adetola, O., Aborishade, R. & Fasanmi, S. (eds.). *Research methods in social and management sciences* (pp.247-267).
- Armstrong, E.G. & Grieder, P.L. The Presentation of Identity in the Work Songs of Johnny Cash. (2013). *Popular Music and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2012.656480>
- Ashton, J. (1994). English village carols. *The Journal of American Folklore*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/541692>
- Bennett, J. (2017). *Data analysis of musical and lyric Traits in the UK's favourite Christmas songs*. Chrome extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgiclfndmkaj/https://joebennett.files.wordpress.com/2017/12/musical-and-lyric-traits-in-the-uk_s-favourite-christmas-songs1.pdf
- Coban, F. (2016). The role of the media in international relations. From the CNN effect to Aljazeera effect. *Journal of International Relations and Foreign Policies* 4(2). 45-61
- Coghlan, A. (2016). *Carols from King's*. Random House.
- Collinson, I. (2009). Singing songs, making places, creating selves: Football songs & fan identity at Sydney FC. *Transforming cultures ejournal*. <https://doi.org/10.5130/tfc.v4i1.1057>
- Cooper, B. (2008). *Christmas music ideology and popular culture*. <https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748628087.003.0006>
- Dancesschissel, D. (2016, November 10). History of Christmas Carols Lesson Plan. . Retrieved from <https://study.com/academy/lesson/history-of-christmas-carols-lesson-plan.html>.
- Didiugwu, I.F. (2014). Mass media and transformation of Africa's international relations. *International Journal of Media, Security and Development* 1(1), 70-82.
- Dougher, S. (2020) Professor Shares Why Christmas Music is Therapeutic. Interview Music Therapy professor Ronald Borczon explains how to find peace amidst the chaos of the Christmas season through music
- Fancy D.R., & Leena, L.M. Jingle bells in the historical ways of carol songs.
- Hargreaves, W. & Forbes, M. (2022). *Singing Christmas carols together is more than just tradition, it's also good for you!* <https://studyfinds.org/singing-christmas-carols-good-for-you/>
- Hebert, D. Kallio, A.A, Odendaal, A. (2012). Not so silent night: Tradition, transformation and cultural understandings of Christmas music events in Helsinki, Finland. *Ethnomusicology Forum*. 21 (3).402–

423. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/ethnomusicology.54.2.0318doi:10.1080/17411912.2012.721525>. S2CID 143629912.
- Lehlohonolo S.P, & Zulu, N.S. (2014). Narratives of personal experience: The construction of identity in Basotho accordion songs. *South African Journal of African Languages*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02572117.2014.997055>
- Liberaton, S. (2015). *The science of sad Christmas songs: Psychologist reveals why feeling bad sometimes feels good*. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-3363158/The-science-sad-Christmas-songs-Psychologist-reveals-feeling-bad-feels-good.html>
- Lynn-Ee Ho, E. (2017). *Identity*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118786352.wbieg0107>
- Mbatha, M. (2024). Afro soul group Just Six amplifies Christmas Carol with an African beat. <https://www.news24.com/citypress/trending/afro-soul-group-just-6-amplifies-christmas-carols-with-an-african-beat-20241209>
- Mcdonald, C. (2008). Open secrets: Individualism and middle-class identity in the Songs of Rush. *Popular Music and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007760701214195>
- Meribe, N. & Oke, B. (2017). Climate change reporting in Nigeria. Challenges and implications: Challenges and implications for development. *The Nigerian Journal of Communication* 14(1) 133-162.
- Muscato, C. (2023). History of Christmas Carols. <https://study.com/academy/lesson/history-of-christmas-carols.html>
- jo, T. (2012). PostNwico: *Image of Africa in the western media*. <https://cmsw.mit.edu/mit2/abstract/TOjo.pdf>.
- Osuagwu, (2022). Flattening the curve of imbalance in global information flow: An examination of perceptions of Port Harcourt residents about select African content on Cable News Network (CNN). *Journal of Communication and Media Research* 14 (1). 123-130.
- Osuagwu, T.R. (2020). Understanding the role of indigenous festivals in community development: A study of the Awaka community (Nigeria). *International Communication Research Journal*. 34-47.
- Rice, T. (2010). Disciplining *ethnomusicology*: A Call for a New Approach. *Ethnomusicology*.54 (2) 318-325. University of Illinois Press
- Ścigaj, P. Identity (Including Collective Identity) (2021). *Politaja*. <https://doi.org/10.12797>
- Spector, N. (2017). *Does Christmas music turn you into the Grinch? Your brain (and health) on Christmas carols*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/better/health/why-christmas-music-has-profound-impact-our-mental-health-ncna822566>
- he promoter.com (n.d). How African communities in the UK celebrate Christmas. <https://www.thepromota.com/how-african-communities-in-the-uk-celebrate-christmas/>

- Udeze, S.E. Emmanuel, N.M. and Asogwa, J.O. (2014). Nigeria in the eye of the foreign media: X-raying CNN and Aljazeera reportage of insecurity in Nigeria. *International Journal of Media, Security and Development* 1(1), 3-10.
- Wimmer, R.D. & Dominic, J.R. (1997). *Mass media research: An introduction*. (5th edition). Wardsworth Publishing Company.
- Yuliantari, A.P. (2020). Migration and the Maggarians' cultural identity as represented in MAGGARAIAN RAP songs. *International Journal of Humanity Studies (IJHS)* <https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v3i2.2195>