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FOLK SENSIBILITY IN THE DOMINANT FORMS OF STICKERS IN THE CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN ENVIRONMENT

Ogbonye, B. I
National Root Crops Research Institute,
Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria.

Abstract
Stickers in the contemporary Nigerian environment are very active in the deep recesses of the human minds, enraptured, piercing, thought-provoking, our moods and feelings speak volumes. Human beings see, and react in different ways. The stickers are powerful, adaptable, noticeable, expressive, and are used in most aspects of modern life, and they have timeless appeal. The promotion of good causes and ideologies and the creation of awareness are among their functions to the society. This work analyses the nature, structure, meaning, functions, types and the examples of stickers especially in the context of the contemporary Nigerian environment. This work has shown that stickers are art forms that teach, guide, educate, advise, instruct, warn, advertise, protest, inform, motivate, direct, inspire, enhance or influence one's view about life. The work embodies a great deal of morality, history, social stratification and sophistication, the real meaning and essence of life as reflected in the explanations and analyses of stickers. This work further showed that stickers as expressed here, are rich in folklore, folk sensibility, literature, art, and the heritage of the people of Nigeria.

Keywords: Folklore, folk sensibility, stickers, art, artist.
Corresponding author: bifeanyiogbonye2012@gmail.com.

Introduction
Stickers are beautiful, powerful tools of self and public expressions that reach the people directly in a faster pace. This study is an attempt to highlight the design, structure types and functions of stickers to the contemporary Nigerian environment. Stickers promote some culture and traditions of the various peoples of Nigeria. Stickers often try to teach and educate the people on the way forward in any situation, but the perception differs in people.
The origin of stickers is very important to note. It has been reported that the ancient Egyptians first created stickers to publicize or advertise their daily market rates. The Archaeologists had found items at the excavation sites of Egypt that look like price list or product descriptions plastered to walls of ancient cities. In the modern world, some popular names like Sir Roland Hill, R. Stanton Avery, the European advertising gurus etc., have been associated with the invention and innovation of stickers.

Stickers become more integral to business and products. They truly have an innate ability to quickly and simply convey ideas by making people become aware of important information. This is what stickers in Nigeria have tried to achieve over the years. Stickers are made for the public as the perfect way to promote and share ideas with thousands of people every day. Today, in Nigeria as well as other parts of the world, stickers are most frequently printed utilizing digital technology, allowing for clarity and bold colour with a variety of material inks and adhesives. Digital printing was introduced in Nigeria with exorbitant prices, but the advances in technology and raw materials have made it more accessible and affordable to the public. Sophisticated machines now print stickers and labels with various materials, and work on them to a perfect finish.

Folk sensibility exposes the people to the experience, knowledge, deep feeling and understanding associated with the folklore of their environment. As Nigerians are very adaptive, they render their folklore both in the English language, and in their native languages, and they have even taken foreign religions to be path of their folklore! And the religious stickers here attest to this fact. Therefore, folk sensibility is the main background to

this study. Before proceeding to a definition or description of folklore, especially in this context is necessary. Maria Leach and Jerome Fried, in their book, reflected B.A. Botkin's definition of folklore in this way:

> As folklore approaches the level of literate and literary, it tends to become more elaborate and self conscious in expression, to shape about itself a formal tradition with prestige value, and to become absorbed into the mainstream of culture. As it approaches the level of the illiterate and sub literary, folklore constitutes a basic part of our oral culture, in the proverbial folk-say and accumulated mother wit of generations that bind man to man and people to people with traditional phrases and symbols. Folklore thus takes root in the ''humble influences of place and kinship,'' of shared experience and wisdom, and has its flower and fruition in those works of art in which the individual artist succeeds in identifying himself with a folk tradition and giving it universal form and significance. On both levels- folk culture and folk art- folklore derives its integrity and survival value from a direct response to and participation in group experience, and the fusion of the individual and the common sense. (399)

The presentations and expressions of stickers, are formed from the folk sensibility/tradition of the Nigerian people 'with traditional phrases and symbols.' The inscriptions, symbols, local coinage and flavour of stickers in Nigeria, speak of the traditions of the people. The Nigerian influences, experiences, wisdom, kinship, environment, tradition, relationships, and group experience are reflected in the stickers, for a global appeal.

The stickers in contemporary Nigerian environment have its roots in folklore, literature, language, and art. There is creative imagination (literature) before the performance (what is said, written, designed, or drawn,) as seen in stickers. Folklore is all about the culture and heritage of a people. It refers to the traditions, expressions and stories of a community, state, country or region, which are part of the oral culture of such a people. The word *folk* mean people from a particular origin, region, state, tribe, or country who have a particular or specific ways of life. Then the word *lore* means the traditions, expressions, stories of a particular group of people, especially when they are not written down. Then, it should be noted that folklore now comprises everything written down, and those not written down. Afam Ebeogu airs his view thus:

> The serious commitment of modern scholars of folk/oral literature in Nigeria is to be seen in their attempt to broaden the areas covered by that scholarship beyond the narrow confines of the traditional approach, with the result that such genres of literature as proverbs, slang, aphorisms, obituaries, myth, jokes, slogans and so on which had been regarded as some kind of sub-genres of literature, are now fully acknowledged as encompassing a significant spectrum of folk sensibility. Focus on folk art has revealed that literary consciousness among the folk is intimately connected with other aspects of folk life and thought, so that to begin to understand who and what constitute folk culture is to begin to appreciate the presence and humanity of a large percentage of the Nigerian population who very often occupy only a peripheral position in the consciousness of policy makers and implementers. (5)

Folk/oral literature in Nigeria covers such areas as 'proverbs, slang, aphorisms....' These areas are very much related to the topic of the study, and we see that the folk sensibility in the dominant forms of stickers in the contemporary Nigerian environment incorporates 'proverbs, slang, aphorisms, obituaries, myth, slogans, and so on' to reflect the lives and situation of the people. The majority of the people that make up the Nigerian population are not involved in the decision making policy and governance of the Nigerian state, but they are

the people mainly involved in the generation and use of stickers. They are the folk that practise the lore.

Literature is vast and accommodating, and the comparative study of literature helps to advance life and meaning of human existence in every field of human thought, reasoning, and endeavour. As a discipline, Literature is equipped to study cultures and traditions of various peoples around the world, and since folklore focuses on the people's culture and traditions to a very large extent. Therefore, folklore is in the domain of literature. The emergence of the intrinsic rhetoric, discourse analysis, semantics, stylistic and pragmatics of the art, add to the meaning and purpose of stickers in the contemporary Nigerian environment. Thus, stickers are essentially fused with proverbs which portray the folk life, folk art, and folk sensibility of the people.

These dominant forms of stickers in the contemporary Nigerian environment, as communicative processes, with folk sensibility, and as "emotionally and intellectually effective verbal instruments" (Akporobaro 85) are often fused with Nigerian proverbs, laced with great meanings of thought and reasoning on life. They are full of poetry, wisdom, humour, and 'the communicative resources of language – imagery, simile...,' which are also the figures of speech. Thus, stickers, are used to portray facts and ideas motivated by 'common sense, human experience, and the realities of human relationships,' which are transmitted from generation to generation to the folk. Then, we see that these communicative resources of language are literature, and without them, language itself becomes dull and unattractive, and these are never the hallmarks of the stickers in the contemporary Nigerian environment.

Isidore Okpewho says that ''One major usefulness of any form of literature is that it offers delight and so relieves us of various pressures and tensions both physically and mentally.''(106) Sticker presentations offer us 'delight and so relieve us' of troubles, every stress of mind and body. They give a feeling of great pleasure when they appeal to our minds in certain ways. For example, a bereaved person can find consolation at the sight of a particular sticker that reflects his/her mood positively.

The considerations of the use of stickers are formed from the background of their generation and development. In this way we talk about the social, political, religious, and cultural backgrounds which provide good sources or materials for the stickers. It is also important to emphasize that the issue of context of situation follows the background to achieve the set goals. Behind the existence of stickers is the artist's personality, the place or scene of performance, and the social or cultural environment. As Okpewho reveals:

> The artist's personality implies everything that the artist brings as an individual to the performance of the literature: personal artistic inclinations, family background, and personal experiences as well as training received and the circumstances in which the artist has frequently worked that may be said to have contributed to the formation of a personal style. These elements of the artist's total personality provide a context for the oral literature in the sense that together they shape the material that ultimately emerges in performance. (105)

From the foregoing, one comes to appreciate that the personality of the artist is often manifested in the stickers. The artist, who is also the writer, employs words, proverbs, symbols, slang, graffiti or cartoon where necessary to achieve his goals for the presentation. The oral literature and folk sensibility of a people provide the basis, foundation and inspiration for the 'artist's total personality' which shapes his performance in the inscriptions, and drawings/ designs on the stickers and the usage of slangs.

The scene of performance involves everything that has to do with the text that first proceeds from the mind of the artist before being written down, or drawn.

Stickers

A Sticker is a small piece of paper or plastic with a picture or writing on one side and glue or another similar substance on the other side, so that it will fasten to a surface. Also known as label, tag, or ticket, the sticker is a sticky object which has a picture or label on it, that one pastes or sticks onto something. Stickers are used for decoration, or for functional purposes, depending on the situation. They come in many different shapes, sizes, colours and designs. They are often placed or attached to items such as walls, notebooks, cars, windows, chairs, etc.

Brand stickers may be attached to goods, to label the goods as coming or belonging to a particular company or organisation. They may also be used to describe the qualities or stuff of the goods from a clearer perspective. The marketing stickers promote one's work or business, and they are ideal for packaging. Sticker has other forms of meaning: a person or thing that sticks, a persevering or industrious person, something thorny; that holds, clings to one's clothing, shoe, etc., something you get for doing well on your academic outing, assignment, exam, homework or something else.

Stickers are part of the folklore of the people. The Nigerian man or woman develops certain feelings on his or her mind from a view of the inscriptions/marks on a sticker, which consciously or unconsciously suggest his/her background and heritage. Bukar Usman maintains that ''folklore tells tales just as the tales tell the history of communities and of mankind.'' (50) The inscriptions and drawings or designs on the stickers, remind the Nigerian person of his/her roots. For example, the sticker that bears *Achara* and *Egusi* soup image in any part of the world shows the Nigerian origin or background of the delicacy, and this is a product of folklore. The soup tells tales of its Nigerian origin and flavour through the sticker. Stickers embody stories. They come as short adaptations which remind us of the full stories behind the inscriptions on the stickers. The themes, characters and images in stickers are metaphorical reflections of human desires and behaviours. The interest shown in digital technology suggests the resourcefulness and ever – changing nature of the folklore subgenre of literature. Leach and Fried lay emphasis on the materials of folklore. According to them, ''Folklore materials thrive in a society in which there are people of considerable native intelligence, artistic appreciation, memory, imagination and creative urge, who can comprehend, value, remember and recreate their native folklore and thus propagate it as a living tradition.''(691) The sticker presentations in the contemporary Nigerian environment show a good amount of 'native intelligence,' and the people appreciate works of art as seen in their stickers which are presented imaginatively and creatively. The Nigerian people also have a great understanding and value of their 'native folklore,' which is the life they live every day. In Nigeria we see such stickers bearing the following inscriptions:

- *Uche Ka Aku*– Wisdom Is Greater Than Wealth
- Honest Labour
- *Amuru Onye Na Ego*? - Who Was Born With Money?
- Good Friend
- *Onye Chi Mere Eze Ga – Abu Eze* – Whom God Has Destined To Be King/Great Will Be King/Great
- No Mistakes
- *Allahu Akbar*- God Is The Greatest/ Most High
- One Nation, One People
- *Chukwu Dalu*- God Thank You
- *Chi Bu Ndum* – God Is My Life
- I Go Change Am For You
- *Nwata Bulie Nna Ya Elu, Ogodo Awuchie Ya Anya* – If A Child Insults His father He Faces The Consequences.

- *NwataKwochaa Aka OsoroOgaranyaRieNri* – If A Child Washes His Hands well. He Dines With The Rich.
- The Young Shall Grow
- No Skin Pain
- Monkey No Fine
- Fear Woman And Save Your Life
- *Osi Na Chi* – It Comes From God
- Willie Willie Don Die, Na Who Kill Am?
- *Echoke Here oo*
- *Penny Bu Ego* - Penny Is Money
- Jesu Owambe -Jesus Is Here
- Envy No Man
- *Obu Ngwongwo* – Carrier Of Luggage/ Of Many Things
- Forward Ever, Backward Never

These sticker inscriptions are deeply rooted in the folklore of the people. As such, they are not independent. They all confirm the axiom that the final product and intention of stickers have always remained the same- to give meaningful message to the public.

Types of Stickers

There are many types of stickers. However, they could be categorized in different ways by different analysts. Such classification could be derived from the function the stickers play or maybe the places where they are pasted. In our context, we are interested in the following: Bumper, House, Price, Mood, Symbolic, Wedding, Souvenir/Memento, and Decorative stickers

Bumper Stickers

These are the stickers that people stick on the bumper of their cars, buses, or lorries with different messages. Whether the bumper stickers appear funny or are evocative of religious orientation, they are nonetheless meaningful. The popular inscriptions on bumper stickers in the contemporary Nigerian environment include the following:

- God Who Lifted Me Up Will Not Let Me Down
- His Banner Over Me Is Love
- *Ije Love*- Journey Of Love
- 2024, My Wealthy Place
- Whatsoever I Lay My Hand Upon Shall Prosper In Jesus Name
- Relax! Every Problem Has An Expiry Date
- I Am Covered With The Blood Of Jesus
- *Ego Bata*- Money come
- *Ego Better*- Money is Better
- Man Proposes God Disposes
- Miyetti Allah
- Jump And Pass
- I Go Japa
- My family Is Covered With The Blood Of Jesus
- Givers Never Lack
- The Best In Life Is To Have Jesus
- I Am A Divine Project, I Cannot Be Abandoned
- Touch Not My Anointed And Do My Prophets No Harm
- Jesus Only Is Our Message
- Shut Up, Are You God?
- *Gwo Gwo Gwo Ngwo*

The meanings of these dominant stickers are self explanatory. Nigerians are deeply religious people, and this suggests why religious stickers are dominating. Nigerians also believe that these religious stickers have a way of warding off evils for them. In Nigeria, stickers were often used during the struggles and campaigns for Nigeria's independence though they were not as popular then as they are today.

House Stickers

House stickers are usually placed on doors of houses, windows, and walls which depict life experiences and the family goals and aspirations and religious beliefs, The dominant forms of house stickers in the contemporary Nigerian environment are:

- My House Is Covered With The Blood Of Jesus
- God Rules In My Household
- Nagode Allah- Thank You God
- Member Adoration Ministry Enugu
- Omega Mountain Of Fire Ministry
- Allah Sarki- God is king
- Member, Christ Embassy (Living word)
- Proudly Catholic
- Prayer Touches God But Praise Moves Him, Praise Him And Be Raised Forever

The fact remains that there is no demarcation between bumper stickers and house stickers. They are all used based on preferences or choices. Nigerians widely use religious stickers, or stickers that have religious undertones more than the ordinary stickers. These stickers show faith, identity, and worldview. The people define their individual and group identities within their contemporary environment through the use of stickers. The stickers serve as response to the nature, mindset, belief and folk sensibility of an overage Nigerian.

Stickers help to mould the individual aspirations about a future which transcends the present. Bumper or vehicle stickers have more powerful influence on the people due to their high mobility rates, and Nigerians have utilized them to the fullest. Political stickers have also played prominent roles in this regard.

Through the political stickers in Nigeria people define their individual and group identities, political party affiliations and institutional practices which guarantee social security, gains and privileges. The various political stickers in Nigeria have the following coinages and symbols:

- PDP: Peoples Democratic Party; Power to the people. (Umbrella is the symbol)
- APC: All Progressives Congress; Change. (Broom is the symbol or logo)
- APGA: All Progressives Grand Alliance. (Cock is the symbol)
- ANPP: All Nigeria Peoples Party. (Maize is the symbol)
- LP: Labour Party; Forward Ever. (Papa, Mama, Pikin is the symbol)

The political, religious and ordinary stickers can be placed on vehicles, houses or any other place deemed fit. Though stickers, whether religious, political, cultural, create tension and competition among religious groups, political groups, tribal groups, associations, organizations and nations. They create knowledge and awareness, and educate. The people or groups, who use stickers to incite hatred, envy, and start the struggle to propagate one group above the other, do so to their own peril. The advantages or gains of stickers far outweigh the disadvantages.

Price Sticker

This is the official price tag that is marked on something, especially on goods and services in shopping centres, supermarkets, companies, industries and so on. Though the price sticker may give the buyers a sticker shock (unpleasant feeling or surprise that people get or experience at the sight of the high price of something especially when it is much more

expensive than they expected) it makes sales easier, as there would be no need for buyers to haggle over prices. The sticker shock is mostly witnessed in the contemporary Nigerian environment where prices of goods and services are mostly higher than expected.

Mood Stickers/ Emojis

The stickers here portray or express the way someone is feeling at a particular time. Mood stickers/emojis are also used in Facebook (Meta), WhatsApp, Instagram and other forms of social media network to depict various meanings and moods during chats. The mood stickers are not only used in the contemporary Nigerian environment but they are also used in almost every part of the world. Mood stickers are great. People like them and use them perhaps more than any other sticker set, for human beings are products of moods. The different moods expressed by moods stickers or emojis are as follows:

- Tears of joy sticker- used when someone is extremely happy
- Smiling or happy face stickers
- Big grin – used for jokes or something funny is going on in the conversation
- Angry face sticker
- Sad and weeping sticker
- Grin/giggle sticker
- Gloomy or depressed sticker
- Heart eyes sticker-used in romantic chats
- Frown sad look sticker
- Utterly shocked and surprised sticker
- Anger and revenge sticker
- Shocked or embarrassed sticker
- Shy sticker
- Dizzy or confused sticker
- Anger and resentment sticker
- Angel sticker
- Wink sticker
- Embarrassed and shy sticker
- Irritation or slight disbelief sticker
- Laughing at others sticker
- Thinking or unsure sticker
- Cool, side smile sticker with glasses

The essence of these mood stickers is that it is a way of expressing how one feels with his/her friends, relatives, and elicits reactions from them. The stickers are useful, colourful, and expressive in much the same way as words. The mood stickers express a whole lot of ideas and moods in response to conversations with friends that sometimes words cannot express. What makes a Nigerian extremely happy might turn out to be what makes an American or a European to commit suicide! So, the background behind the use of these stickers, which is the folklore embedded in the Nigerian environment is essential.

Symbolic Stickers

The symbolic stickers share a lot of similarities with the mood stickers. They can also portray moods but in different forms. The symbolic stickers need no inscriptions for the meaning to show. The examples of symbolic stickers are as follows:

- Lion – strength, supremacy, determination
- Eagle – courage, pride, royalty
- Elephant – greatness, prosperity, strength
- Gun – war, violence
- Tiger – braveness, power

- Tortoise – cunning, crafty
- Python - authority, strength
- Dove – peace, love
- Lion – supremacy, power
- Peacock – beauty, royalty, elegance
- Cross – holiness, spirituality
- Pig – filth, gluttony

Wedding Stickers

These normally depict the concept, mentality, sensibility, meaning and purpose of weddings.

Some examples are:

- Celebration Of Love
- Chi Weds Prince
- Always Forever
- God's Love Is Upon This Union Forever, Amen
- Amarachi Weds Abayomi
- What God Has Joined Together Let No Man Put Asunder
- Love Never Gives Up, And It's Faith, Hope, And Patience Never Fails.
- *Idi Mma Jehovah* 2024 – The goodness of Jehovah
- *Love Nwantiti* –Gradual love
- Blessed Union, IfyChi
- *Igba Nkwu*/ Wedding Ceremony
- *Igodo Ndu* 2024

Souvenir/ Memento Stickers

These come in forms of gifts that are given to someone, especially a celebrant as a reminder of a place, person, occasion, or a situation. The stickers here serve as reminder of the past, and they are pasted on the gifts. Some examples are:

- In Loving Memory Of Our Dear Mother, Mrs. Beatrice Mulumba
- The Mercies Of God Shall Be Upon This Union
- Thanks For Coming, Ify And Nkem
- Epitome Of Love and Integrity, *Mama Anyi Nne Oha*
- Ikwuano Vocation Association 2024. Courtesy: Ikwuano Catholic Priests

These stickers enrich our lives and create the folk sensibility that helps us move forward and have focus and direction in life.

Decorative Stickers

Decorative stickers are used for embellishment or designing of buildings, exercise/text books, and any other material available. These stickers are used to decorate wedding hall, auditorium, theatre/playhouse, graduation ceremony hall, especially for pupils, music background scene etc. Decorative stickers adorn the walls of pupils' class rooms which get them enraptured to the teachings, drawings, and inscriptions on the stickers. This provides them with the needed entertainment and education.

Advocacy and Instructive Stickers

This category of stickers is the type that can be used as campaign materials to give special information on a on a public notice that is of general interest. Human right and women's rights group also use this type of sticker for advocacy especially the girl-child protection rights. In Nigeria, stickers have been used to create awareness on the dangers of HIV virus, Malaria/Typhoid, lack of immunization, breast cancer prevention and so on.

These have helped immensely in shaping Nigeria for good.

Further examples of stickers in contemporary Nigerian environment are:

- Vehicles Parked At Owner's Risk
- No Dumping Of Refuse
- Horn Before Overtaking
- No Credit Today, Come Tomorrow
- No Food For Lazy Man
- *Ego Di Na Ogwu* – Money Is In The Thorn
- *Akachukwu Di Ya* – The Hand Of God Is In It
- *Onyemaechi*? – Who Knows Tomorrow?
- *Echi Di Ime* – Tomorrow Is Pregnant
- Overtaking Is Allowed
- *Uwa Mmebi* – A Spoilt World
- *Zere Uwa* – Avoid The world
- This Is Lagos
- Who Dey Breet! (Breath)
- *Ikengas And Ikengress* – powerful
- *Ikwuano Kwenu* – Ikwuano Greetings
- *Ochiabu Uto* – Laughter Does Not Mean Love
- *Iko Mba Uwa* – World Cup
- Biofamous Centre
- *Omewere Ma Chi Ekweghi* – Dry Destiny
- No Gree For Anybody

Conclusion

The folk sensibility in the dominant forms of stickers in the contemporary Nigerian environment has helped Nigeria to build a reputation, based on folklore, religion, and worldview, where everyone has become an artist in the practice of these dominant forms of stickers which make up the study. There are entertainment, education, and didactic approaches in these forms of literature- stickers. This orientation has promoted Nigeria's brand in the world of stickers.

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