



EVALUATING THE ROLE OF AIRTEL NIGERIA ‘A REASON TO IMAGINE’ CSR CAMPAIGN IN SHAPING YOUTH ATTITUDES TOWARDS CREATIVITY

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ABSTRACT: *The study examined the impact of Airtel Nigeria’s ‘A Reason to Imagine’ CSR campaign on youth attitudes towards creativity in Owerri Senatorial Zone, Imo State, with a population of 1,402,429 youths. Using questionnaires, data from a sample of 385 respondents were analysed through descriptive statistics and hypothesis testing. Findings revealed that awareness and exposure significantly influenced positive attitudes towards creativity, supporting social cognitive, elaboration likelihood, and planned behaviour theories. The campaign effectively shaped perceptions, fostering engagement in creative pursuits among youths.*

KEYWORDS: CSR, Youth Attitudes, Creativity, Airtel Nigeria, Media Campaigns, Youth Empowerment.



INTRODUCTION

In recent years, corporate organizations have increasingly adopted social campaigns not only to promote their brands but also to drive social change, particularly among young people. In Nigeria, where over 60% of the population is under the age of 25 (National Population Commission, 2023), youth-focused campaigns have become essential in shaping public discourse, identity, and aspirations. Airtel Nigeria's "A Reason to Imagine" campaign is one such initiative, seeking to inspire and activate creativity among young Nigerians through storytelling, multimedia engagement, and talent showcases (Vanguard, 2023).

The campaign is built around the idea that imagination is the primary asset required to achieve success, and it presents creativity as an accessible and powerful tool for young people to express themselves and solve real-world problems (BrandCrunch, 2023). Airtel's messaging, delivered through social media, TV commercials, talent shows such as *The Voice Africa*, and influencer collaborations, attempts to redefine success beyond academic or economic achievement by centering creative potential and self-belief (The Guardian Nigeria, 2023). This campaign, while clearly commercial in orientation, positions itself as a contributor to youth development and empowerment.

Despite its high visibility and ambitious tone, there is limited academic inquiry into the actual influence of such corporate campaigns on the way Nigerian youth perceive creativity. This is particularly relevant in a context where creativity is often under-valued or narrowly defined, especially in more traditional or economically challenged areas. For instance, Nwekeaku (2019) notes that despite the creative potential of Nigerian youth, societal and educational systems often stifle expression due to rigid structures, outdated curricula, and a lack of support for innovation. Similarly, Obioma-Onyenma and Ukwuije (2022) found that students' creative abilities in Port Harcourt were significantly shaped by access to learning materials, media exposure, and encouragement from mentors or peers.

Against this backdrop, the need arises to explore whether and how campaigns like Airtel's "A Reason to Imagine" influence young people's perception of creativity; not just their capacity for it. Do they begin to see creativity as a valuable trait? Are they more confident in identifying themselves as creative individuals? Do such messages make creative careers seem more viable? These are pressing questions in a country where youth unemployment remains high and where creative industries are becoming key areas of economic growth (PwC Nigeria, 2021).

This study focuses specifically on Imo State, a region in South-East Nigeria with a vibrant youth population and growing access to digital technology. While many young people in Imo are exposed to national campaigns through television and online platforms, local socio-economic conditions, cultural values, and educational infrastructure may affect how such messages are received. As Ibrahim (2023) notes, regional disparities in digital literacy and access to creative opportunities often mediate how campaigns are interpreted by youths in different parts of Nigeria.

In today's rapidly evolving world, creativity has emerged as a vital skill for youth empowerment, economic participation, and self-expression. Despite the recognized potential of Nigerian youths in driving creativity and innovation, there is a gap in understanding the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives in shaping their attitudes towards



creativity. This study therefore addressed this gap by examining the influence of Airtel's "*A Reason to Imagine*" campaign on how youths in Imo State perceive creativity, and whether the campaign meaningfully contributes to changing their attitudes, beliefs, and aspirations in this regard. It is unclear whether Airtel's campaign has succeeded in shifting the perception of creativity among youths in Imo State; whether they now value creative expression more, feel empowered to pursue creative ventures, or see creativity as a meaningful aspect of identity and development. Without such data, it becomes difficult to assess the effectiveness of corporate social campaigns in achieving their developmental aims beyond brand promotion.

By examining youths in Imo State, this research sought to understand the psychological and social influence of Airtel's campaign on their perceptions of creativity. The focus was on how young people define creativity, how the campaign may affect their confidence in their creative abilities, and whether it encourages them to pursue creative interests in a sustained way.

This study accessed the following research objectives:

1. To assess the level of awareness and exposure of youths in Owerri Senatorial Zone to Airtel Nigeria's '*A Reason to Imagine*' CSR campaign.
2. To examine how the CSR campaign's content and messaging influence youth attitudes towards creativity.
3. To evaluate the extent to which engagement with the campaign has shaped the youths' interest in creative expression across different fields (e.g., music, writing, art, design).
4. To identify the perceived factors that continues to affect youth attitudes toward creativity despite exposure to the campaign.
5. To determine the relationship between the variables in the study, the following hypotheses were formulated;

H01: There is no significant relationship between exposure to Airtel Nigeria's "*A Reason to Imagine*" campaign and positive attitudes towards creativity among youths in Owerri Senatorial Zone.

H02: The level of awareness of Airtel Nigeria's "*A Reason to Imagine*" campaign does not significantly influence youths' attitudes towards creativity in Owerri Senatorial Zone.

H03: Participation level in the campaign does not affect attitude towards creativity.

The significance of this study lies not only in evaluating a single campaign but in understanding the broader impact of brand-driven narratives on youth mindset and social identity. It will also contribute to discussions about the role of corporate social responsibility in shaping developmental goals beyond infrastructure and charity, particularly in the realm of youth empowerment and cultural change.

This study offers valuable insights for companies, especially in telecommunications, to enhance their CSR efforts and better engage youth, fostering creativity and innovation. It also



provides guidance for policymakers and educators in Imo State by highlighting attitudes that influence creative participation, aiding in the development of policies and programs that prepare youth for a modern, knowledge-based economy.

Academically, the research contributes empirical evidence to the link between advertising, youth development, and creativity, serving as a resource for scholars examining how corporate messaging shapes cultural norms and youth behaviour.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

‘Business decisions can profoundly affect the dignity and rights of individuals and communities...It is not a question of asking business to fulfil the role of government, but of asking business to promote human rights in its own competence.’ says Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, in 1998.

Over the years, CSR has evolved from being merely philanthropy to a strategic component essential for corporate sustainability and competitiveness. It is no longer seen as a philanthropic activity but as a strategic approach to creating long-term value for both businesses and society (Porter & Kramer, 2006). The shift from a transactional to a relational relationship underscores the importance of corporations actively engaging with community needs and social issues (Porter & Kramer, 2006). With a younger, socially conscious workforce, companies increasingly adopt CSR practices that resonate with youthful ideals and values. Since the 1960s, CSR has drawn significant attention from various sectors, often labelled as “corporate sustainability” and “corporate citizenship.” SMEs also engage in CSR, though less visibly compared to larger corporations (Fernando, 2024).

Businesses direct efforts towards social responsibility, advocating for women's rights, environmental protection, or poverty eradication on different scales. From a public relations standpoint, socially responsible companies present more appealing images to consumers and shareholders, enhancing financial performance (Murphy, 2024). CSR is often confused with related concepts such as business ethics, philanthropy, cause-related marketing, and corporate citizenship, with roots tracing back to early 20th-century debates on the social role of business (Bowen, 1953; Carroll, 1979, 1989; Davis, 1973; Friedman, 1970; Johnson, 1971). Prominent industrialists like Carnegie and Rockefeller advocated altruism, and CSR gained prominence in the 1950s and 1960s as a challenge to profit maximization.

The 1970s and 1980s saw CSR institutionalized through structured frameworks, including the UN Global Compact, ISO 26000, and the triple bottom line (Elkington, 1997), which assesses success based on social, environmental, and economic factors (EC, 2011; GRI, 2013). Today, CSR encompasses the relationship between corporations and society, considering stakeholders such as customers, employees, shareholders, and NGOs (Crane et al., 2008; Dunfee, 2008; Donaldson & Preston, 1995). In a globalized economy, firms recognize that social responsibility is vital for competitiveness, brand reputation, and long-term sustainability, with organizations like Business for Social Responsibility and the International Business Leaders Forum promoting these efforts (Catalyst Consortium, 2002).



Adopting CSR strategies attracts loyal consumers willing to pay premiums for socially responsible products, enhancing reputation, brand recognition, and profitability (Murphy, 2024; Porter & Kramer, 2006). CSR also offers operational benefits such as cost savings, risk management, and access to capital, aligning with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001; United Nations, 2015). Definitions of CSR vary but generally emphasize voluntary efforts to improve social, environmental, and economic conditions, driven by stakeholder interests (Hopkins, 2004; Growther & Aras, 2008; Moir, 2010; Katamba et al., 2012; Grigoris, 2016; Martín-de Castro & González-Masip, 2020; Enderle, 2021; Das et al., 2021).

CSR is integral to OECD policies and is viewed as an ethical, strategic approach to corporate responsibility, involving ethical practices, legal compliance, and community engagement (European Commission, 2011; Chandler, 2001). It emphasizes acting responsibly towards all stakeholders, including communities and the environment, with firms reporting their efforts through CSR disclosures (Stobierski, 2021). Studies show that CSR positively influences financial performance, reputation, and employee engagement, with many consumers preferring and willing to pay more for socially responsible brands (Nimani et al., 2021; Murphy, 2024).

In simple terms, CSR is “what you do,” “how you do it,” and “what you say.” It includes integrated policies and practices, supported by top management, covering current, past, and future impacts. CSR focus varies by business size, sector, and location. Company leaders see CSR as more than discrete practices or marketing gestures. The World Business Council on Sustainability Development (1998) described CSR as “the continuing commitment by Business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large.” According to the European Union (2006), “CSR is the concept that an enterprise is responsible or accountable for its impact on all relevant shareholders.” Macmillan (2005) defined CSR as a company’s obligation to be accountable to all its stakeholders in its operations and activities. Socially responsible companies consider the full scope of their impact on communities and the environment, balancing stakeholder needs with profit-making. Clarkson (1995) noted that CSR involves treating stakeholders ethically, both within and outside the firm, to enhance their development. A reputable author, Kenneth Andrews Steiner (1977) defined Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) “as the intelligent and objective concern for the welfare of the society that retains the individual and corporate behavior from ultimately destructive activities, no matter how immediately profitable and leads to the directions of positive construction of human betterment”. As an improvement on the above definitions, Koontz and O'Donnell (1968) defined social responsibility as the personal obligation of everyone, as he acts in his own interests, but he must always have due regard that his freedom does not restrict others from doing the same thing. He further noted that a socially responsible individual or organization will obey the laws of the land because the rights of others are at stake.

Firms embracing CSR are organized to positively impact the world. CSR is a form of self-regulation expressed through initiatives and strategies, depending on organizational goals. These efforts are communicated via CSR reports (Stobierski, 2021). The study by Nimani, Zeqiraj, & Spahija found that the majority of Kosovo companies practicing CSR benefit in financial performance, market share, reputation, employee productivity, and loyalty.



There are various examples of what “socially responsible” means from organization to organization. Firms often follow the triple bottom line concept, which measures social and environmental impact, sustainability efforts, and profits, summarized as “profit, people, planet” (Stobierski, 2021). Buchholz (1991) noted that a good definition of social responsibility must include: going beyond profit production, solving social problems caused by the organization, having a broader constituency than stockholders, making impacts beyond marketplace transactions, and serving wider human values.

Adewanju (2012) highlighted the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) characteristics for CSR: meeting current stakeholders' needs without compromising future generations, adopting CSR voluntarily for long-term benefits, integrating social, environmental, and economic policies daily, and embedding CSR in management strategy.

The three dimensions of CSR are economic, social, and environmental responsibility. In Nigeria, limited liability companies report their CSR efforts in four areas (Adewanju, 2012): addressing the interests of nearby communities (Bello, 1988), supporting national or state activities like education and sports, responding to major disasters (e.g., oil spills, fires, floods), and diversifying activities important for economic development. Examples include Guinness funding eye clinics and Texaco diversifying into agriculture.

A practical starting point for companies is to review the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Broad goals like Good Health and Well-Being or Gender Equality resonate across sectors, while targeted goals like Life Below Water or Affordable and Clean Energy are pertinent to specific industries.

Moreover, startups and smaller businesses can significantly influence their local communities despite limited financial resources. Schmidt emphasizes starting local with donations and giving back (Reckmann, 2024). To achieve genuine CSR, businesses should evaluate their values, mission, and critical issues, aligning initiatives with their goals and cultural identity, either internally or through external analysis.

Importance of Corporate Social Responsibility

Business success today extends beyond traditional metrics such as profitability, growth, and brand recognition to include impacts on the community, economy, environment, and society.

Stakeholders increasingly evaluate businesses based on their commitment to the greater good, making CSR essential for demonstrating ethical values. Silberhorn and Warren (2007) found that CSR is now integrated into business strategy, driven by performance and stakeholder pressure, emphasizing stakeholder interaction and societal impact. Future trends suggest that CSR and business strategies will continue to converge.

According to Growther & Seifi (2021), CSR offers financial gains, attracts talent, mitigates risks, and enhances brand reputation; differentiating companies in competitive markets. Beyond profit, firms should consider their environmental, social, and economic impact, fostering social responsibility to attract customers and retain employees, which are vital for success (Heyward, 2022). CSR also boosts brand loyalty; 87% of consumers prefer buying from socially responsible companies (Cone, 2017) and improves employee satisfaction and productivity (Glavas & Godwin, 2013). Sustainable practices can reduce costs and stimulate



innovation, creating new business opportunities (Porter & Kramer, 2006; Hart & Milstein, 2003).

Globalization has shifted corporate responsibility toward accountability and transparency, emphasizing societal impact beyond taxes and regulations. CSR fosters positive reputations among consumers, investors, and regulators, encouraging responsible sourcing and environmentally friendly operations, which benefit both society and profitability (Stobierski, 2021). Companies can promote community development through grants, volunteerism, and partnerships, addressing social issues like poverty and inequality, especially in developing countries (World Bank, 2016; Hawn & Ioannou, 2016). Engaging in CSR not only builds goodwill but can enhance long-term profitability by fostering innovation and operational efficiency (Smith et al., 2010).

Incorporating environmental initiatives offers a competitive edge by attracting eco-conscious consumers (Porter & van der Linde, 1995). Meta-analyses show a positive link between CSR and financial performance, with benefits including stronger brand loyalty and reputation (Margolis & Walsh, 2003; Orlitzky et al., 2003). However, some studies warn that CSR can entail higher costs and may not yield immediate financial returns, risking accusations of greenwashing (Brammer & Millington, 2005; Cooleaf, 2024). Critics like Friedman (1970) argue CSR diverts resources from profit, while others warn that superficial efforts for image enhancement may have negative societal effects (Lee et al., 2013).

Balancing stakeholder interests is complex; aligning CSR with business strategy is crucial to meet social and financial goals. Measuring CSR's impact remains challenging due to a lack of standardized metrics, though initiatives like the Global Reporting Initiative aim to improve transparency. Research shows a positive link between social responsibility and financial performance, suggesting long-term benefits outweigh costs (Waddock & Graves, 1997; Hull & Rothenberg, 2007). The resource-based view (RBV) underscores that valuable, rare, and inimitable resources derived from CSR can provide sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1990; Reinhardt, 1998).

Concept of Youth

Young people represent a significant demographic force and are poised to become the next generation of parents, workers, and leaders. Their well-being impacts not just their individual lives, but also the future of the societies they will contribute to and nurture. The effectiveness with which they can assume these roles is heavily reliant on the support from their families and communities, as well as a dedicated commitment from government administrations to foster their development. Addressing the needs of the youth is an ongoing public policy challenge that requires continuous evaluation of policies, reassessment of priorities, allocation of sufficient financial resources, and the efficient execution of programs. To better understand and address these needs, improved resource allocation and policy development are essential (Ruhl, 2011).

There is no universal definition of youth; each country defines it differently, influenced by cultural, socio-political, and institutional factors. The African Union (2011) notes that youth definitions vary across contexts and regions. In developing countries like Africa, socio-economic and political factors complicate these definitions further. Globally, organizations like the UN and ILO typically define youth as individuals aged 15 to 24, with the UN using



“youth” and “young people” interchangeably for statistics (United Nations, 2015). The African Union Charter (2006) broadens this to ages 15 to 35.

National policies vary: Ghana (2010) defines youth as 15–35 years; Nigeria (2009) as 18–35; Kenya (2006) as 15–30; Malaysia (1996) as 15–40, focusing on ages 18–25; and South Africa (2000) as 14–35. Curtain (2001) describes youth as a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood, marked by personal, institutional, and macroeconomic changes, especially in non-traditional societies. Definitions and interactions of these factors differ widely across countries and socio-economic groups.

Matthew (2007) sees youth as a developmental stage involving physical growth and psychological maturation, vital for individual and societal development. Youth is a transitional period, with maturity representing full development (Abdullahi, Abdullahi, Yelwa, 2008). The National Youth Development Policy (2001) highlights that youth’s energy, creativity, and character are crucial for national progress and security, shaping the future through their contributions.

Attitude in the Context of Communication and Persuasion

Attitude is a complex psychological construct central to communication and persuasion, often conceptualized through the tri-component model involving affective, behavioral, and cognitive components (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Each component uniquely influences attitude formation and change, which are crucial for understanding how persuasive messages impact youths.

The affective component pertains to feelings and emotions associated with an object or idea. These immediate emotional responses can bias evaluations and foster positive attitudes, especially when campaigns appeal to hopes or pride. Emotional appeals can generate empathy, enhancing message relevance and effectiveness (Petty, Fabrigar, & Wegener, 2003; Nabi, 2015).

The behavioral component reflects how attitudes influence actions or intentions. According to Ajzen’s (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour, attitudes predict intentions, which then predict actual behaviors. For example, positive attitudes toward creativity can lead youths to participate in creative activities, with intentions serving as a key mediator.

The cognitive component involves beliefs and thoughts about the attributes of the attitude object. Persuasive messages that provide facts and logical reasoning target this component, encouraging youths to re-evaluate their beliefs. The Elaboration Likelihood Model explains that motivated individuals process information deeply, resulting in more durable attitude changes (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

These components are interconnected; emotional messages can influence beliefs, which in turn can lead to behavioral change. Addressing all three in communication campaigns enhances the likelihood of meaningful attitude change (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Petty et al., 2003).

In summary, attitude formation and change involve emotions, beliefs, and intentions. Effective CSR campaigns targeting youth creativity, like Airtel’s ‘A Reason to Imagine’, should strategically engage all components to shape attitudes and foster creative participation.



How Media Campaigns Shape or Reinforce Attitudes among Youth

Media campaigns strongly influence youth attitudes through exposure to persuasive messages, emotional appeals, and endorsements. They shape beliefs, norms, and behaviors during critical identity development stages. For example, the “Truth” anti-smoking campaign successfully reduced teen smoking by resonating with youth culture, preventing over 450,000 from starting to smoke (Farrelly et al., 2012). However, media can also reinforce harmful stereotypes and unrealistic body images, leading to body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016). Additionally, alcohol marketing via media is linked to earlier and increased drinking among youth (Jernigan et al., 2017).

Ultimately, media campaigns wield powerful influence over youth by shaping social norms and reinforcing or challenging existing attitudes. The extent of their impact depends on message framing, credibility of sources, and frequency of exposure. Therefore, ethical considerations in media targeting youth are critical to ensure positive developmental outcomes.

Media campaigns, including corporate social responsibility initiatives like Airtel Nigeria’s ‘A Reason to Imagine,’ play a crucial role in shaping youth attitudes by delivering persuasive messages that resonate with their values and culture. Such campaigns can foster positive beliefs, norms, and behaviors around creativity, much like successful health campaigns (e.g., the “Truth” anti-smoking campaign) have influenced youth attitudes on other issues.

By leveraging emotional appeals, credible messaging, and engaging content, Airtel’s campaign has the potential to influence youth perceptions of creativity, encouraging participation and fostering a supportive environment for innovative expression. Evaluating this campaign’s effectiveness helps understand how CSR-driven media efforts can positively shape youth attitudes toward creativity, much like how health campaigns have impacted behaviors in other domains.

Creativity in the Context of Youth Empowerment

Creativity, in the context of youth empowerment, refers to the capacity of young individuals to generate original ideas, solutions, or expressions that address personal, social, or global challenges. It encompasses problem-solving, artistic expression, and innovation, enabling youth to actively shape their environments and futures. According to Runco and Jaeger (2012), creativity involves both originality and effectiveness, meaning that a creative output must be both novel and appropriate to the context. In youth empowerment, this means fostering environments where young people can explore ideas freely and apply them meaningfully in real-world contexts.

Creative problem-solving allows youth to tackle complex issues such as climate change or social inequality with fresh perspectives (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2014). Similarly, artistic expression, through music, visual arts, or storytelling, enables self-representation and social critique, contributing to identity formation and civic engagement (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004). Moreover, innovation driven by creativity empowers youth to design new technologies or social enterprises, amplifying their agency and impact.

Therefore, creativity is not merely a personal trait but a transformative tool for youth empowerment, equipping young people with the means to imagine and enact change.



How Creativity is Triggered by CSR via Inspiration, Representation, and Opportunity

At root, CSR campaigns are not merely acts of giving; they are social narratives, power relations, and resource investments. Creativity becomes the medium through which CSR is made meaningful, adaptive, locally resonant, innovative, and sustained. Key interlocking drivers are:

Inspiration: CSR can spark inspiration when it connects to values, identities, urgent problems, or aspirational futures. When people see hope, moral purpose, or potential change, that ignites imagination. Inspiration can come from environmental crises, educational gaps, social injustices, or from global agendas (e.g. SDGs) that frame causes as part of something bigger.

Representation: Who is involved, whose voice is included, whose experience is acknowledged, and whose values are visible in the campaign all matter. Representation gives legitimacy, trust, diverse perspectives. It also allows identities and local cultural contexts to shape how CSR is understood and acted upon. Representation may be in communities, employees, artists, youth, marginalized groups.

Opportunity: This refers to the structural provision: time, resources, platforms, institutional spaces, feedback, ability to experiment. Without opportunity, inspiration and representation remain under-utilised. Opportunity includes access (who can participate), agency (how much say), capacity (skills, funding), recognition (visibility, reward).

Creativity flourishes at the intersection: CSR that is inspiring + inclusive (representative) + gives scope to act (opportunity) tends to yield original, effective solutions, stronger engagement, and sometimes unexpected outcomes.

What Happens When One or More of the Three Components are Weak

To fully understand, it's worth considering when inspiration, representation, or opportunity is missing or weak, and how creativity suffers:

Inspiration without representation/opportunity → Leads to superficial or generic campaigns; local interest may be low; ideas may be imported rather than homegrown; sustainable buy-in weak.

Representation without inspiration or opportunity → Tokenism, symbolic inclusion without real voice; voices heard, but no path to action; creative inputs may be stifled if not valued.

Opportunity without representation or inspiration → Platforms may exist, but misaligned with local needs/identities; the opportunity may be bureaucratic, formulaic, or constrained; creative energy may go to waste.

All three present → Strongest creativity: because people are inspired, they see themselves represented, and they have the means to act. There emerges genuine innovation, adaptation, local forms, unexpected hybrids.

Certain theoretical perspectives help explain the mechanics of this triad (inspiration, representation, opportunity):



Self-determination theory (SDT): Autonomy, competence, relatedness = when CSR satisfies these psychological needs, creativity rises. Representation helps relatedness; opportunity helps autonomy and competence; inspiration helps with intrinsic motivation.

Social identity theory: When stakeholders see CSR campaigns align with their identity, culture, beliefs → identification increases, which supports creative input, risk-taking, idea contributions.

Empowerment theory: Participation, control, resource access lead to people feeling empowered; empowerment correlates with creative problem solving.

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Practical Dynamics, Trade-offs, and Unexplored Tensions

To not leave any stone unturned, there are also constraints, trade-offs, and tensions:

Power asymmetry: In many Nigerian CSR settings (e.g. oil/gas in Niger Delta), corporations/local communities have unequal power; companies often dictate what is “CSR”, with limited community input. This limits representation and opportunity.

Sustainability vs short-termity: CSR projects that are chosen because they are cheap, visible, easy (roads, buildings) may inspire less, represent less (if they don’t align with real needs), and offer less opportunity for creative adaptation over time.

Cultural mismatch: Inspiration that comes from external frameworks (global NGOs, foreign funders) may fail to resonate locally; representation of local culture matters. The absence of such alignment reduces creative traction.

Institutional constraints: Weak enforcement, corruption, lack of consistent policy frameworks, infrastructural deficits reduce the opportunity for creative CSR. For example, the voluntary nature of CSR in Nigeria (versus legal mandates elsewhere) means CSR depends heavily on corporate goodwill.

Stakeholder expectations and risk of backlash: When representation is poor, or when CSR fails to meet promises, communities may respond negatively. In Obufia, communities modified alliances or threatened conflict when CSR was delivered badly. Such creative resistance is also a kind of creativity but arises from necessity.



Capacity limitations: Even when opportunity is nominally present, lacking local capacity (skills, knowledge, resources) means creative potential may remain latent.

Empirical Evidence

Although the direct empirical literature linking CSR campaigns and youth creative engagement is relatively limited, indirect evidence offers useful insights. For example, research on employee creativity and CSR suggests a positive correlation between the two. Chaudhary and Akhouri (2019) found that when employees perceived their organisations as socially responsible, they experienced higher levels of work meaningfulness and engagement, which in turn fostered creativity. Although this study focused on employees rather than youth, its findings are relevant insofar as the same psychological mechanisms, such as feelings of purpose and empowerment, may influence young people's creative engagement in CSR-sponsored initiatives.

Similarly, Al-Madadha et al. (2023) demonstrated that CSR practices positively affected junior employees' creative performance in Jordan, mediated by job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviours. While the demographic and organisational contexts differ, the study's emphasis on the role of supportive environments in fostering creativity may apply to youth-centred programmes as well. These findings suggest that CSR campaigns that offer participatory, empowering, and socially meaningful platforms are more likely to stimulate creative engagement.

From a campaign design perspective, participatory CSR strategies enhance public engagement by incorporating interactive features like co-creation and dialogue, especially appealing to digitally active youth. Lee, Kim, and Kim (2021) found that social media campaigns with interactive elements increased consumer involvement, with youth responding well to digital storytelling and creative competitions, fostering ownership and identity. Chae (2021) reinforced this, showing that active engagement tactics outperform passive messaging, leading to deeper impact.

Broader CSR-funded social programs, such as Ballard et al.'s (2023) "Authoring Action" and Wright et al.'s (2016) arts initiatives, demonstrate how creative platforms can empower youth, improve skills, and promote civic engagement. Although not always branded as CSR, these examples highlight potential for corporate-supported arts programs to deliver developmental and reputational benefits.

Research indicates that cultural and creative activities support positive youth outcomes, including reduced antisocial behavior (Chan et al., 2022), and community arts projects foster social cohesion (McCarthy & O'Donnell, 2024). However, CSR literature often emphasizes quantitative metrics over qualitative impacts like self-expression or community transformation.

In African contexts, CSR efforts tend to focus on infrastructure and employment, with less emphasis on creative engagement, raising questions about design efficacy in low-resource settings (Olatunle et al., 2020). Overall, participatory, culturally relevant, and creative CSR initiatives are more effective for youth engagement. Yet, gaps remain in understanding their long-term impacts and mechanisms, especially in diverse or non-Western contexts. Future research should explore longitudinal outcomes and develop frameworks linking arts-based youth work with CSR strategies.



A study by Uduji & Okolo-Obasi et al. (2019) titled *Corporate Social Responsibility in Nigeria and Rural Youths in Sustainable Traditional Industries Livelihood in Oil Producing Communities* found that there is a significant relationship between CSR and youth participation in traditional-industry livelihoods (canoe carving, pottery, weaving, etc.), which are creative, cultural skills. CSR revived or supported these industries among rural youth.

In another study, Uduji, Okolo-Obasi & Asongu (2018) titled *Does CSR contribute to the development of rural young people in cultural tourism... Evidence from the Niger Delta*, found that CSR of multinational oil companies (MOCs) in the Niger Delta had potential to aid creative cultural expression via handicrafts and integrating the arts of youth artisans into tourism value chains. However, they observed that youths are often excluded because cultural affairs are seen as elders' domain.

Olatunle, Gumus & Wanjuu (2020), in a study titled *Impact of CSR on Youths Empowerment in Niger Delta*, found that social amenities and employment opportunities provided via CSR had significant statistical relationship with youth empowerment; but scholarship schemes and skill acquisition (expected to support creativity/innovation) were negatively related or non-significant.

In a youth-perspective study by Ojeleye in 2016 titled *Youth Perspective to CSR Programmes among Telecom Companies in Zamfara State*, youth rated CSR activities by telcos (scholarships, sponsorships, educational support, sports sponsorship etc.) in terms of impact; also expressed desire for more science-based programs, intellectual debates, research promotion. While this shows youth expect creativity supporting programs, this particular study captures perception more than measured outcomes.

A study of Learning and Innovation among Youth-Owned Small Businesses in Lagos (Adeosun & Shittu, 2021) found that government support, informal networks, external knowledge infrastructure were positively associated with learning and innovation among youth-owned small businesses. Learning and innovation are close to creativity in entrepreneurial contexts.

A study of creativity skill development among senior secondary students in Port Harcourt (Obioma-Onyenma & Ukwuije) looked at influence of education (school system) on different forms of creativity (technological, literary, artistic) but did not tie directly to CSR.

Studies like "Corporate Social Responsibility and Creative Performance: The Effect of Job Satisfaction and Organizational Citizenship Behavior" (Organizacija, 2023) show that employees' perceptions of CSR, job satisfaction, and behaviors beyond their formal roles (OCB - organizational citizenship behavior) contribute to creative performance.

Mohammed, Ferraris & Troise (2022) studied CSR practices in Saudi Arabia during COVID-19 and found that ethical and philanthropic dimensions of CSR had both direct and indirect effects on employee creativity; affective commitment mediated some of these relationships.

A recent article "Charting new terrains: How CSR initiatives shape employee creativity and contribute to UN-SDGs in a knowledge-driven world" by Ahmad, Samad & Han in 2024 argues that CSR helps foster creativity via mediators like happiness and creative self-efficacy, modulated by individual traits like polychronicity.



Magueijo & Ellwood (2015) found that advertising can contribute to the development of creativity and innovation among individuals. The study suggests that advertising campaigns that are both engaging and informative can motivate individuals to be more creative and systematic in their thinking.

Hynes & Marett (2017) found that advertising campaigns can inspire consumers to adopt more sustainable behaviors. The study suggests that advertising campaigns that are targeted at consumer values and beliefs can motivate individuals to be more creative in solving environmental challenges.

Ma et al. (2020) found that advertising campaigns that evoke positive emotions among consumers, such as happiness, joy, and excitement, increase creativity levels.

More recent research has examined the effects of advertising on more complex outcomes, such as behavior and creativity (Beale, 2009; Black & Stephens, 2011).

Creative-Themed CSR Efforts in Nigeria's Telecom Sector

Creative engagement as an element of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is increasingly recognised as a strategic and socially beneficial focus area, particularly in industries like telecommunications, which rely on youth markets and technological innovation. In Nigeria, CSR initiatives that explicitly promote youth creativity remain relatively sparse but are gaining prominence, especially as companies compete for brand loyalty among a youthful population.

Etisalat Nigeria's (now 9mobile) sponsorship of the Abuja Inter-School Performing Arts Competition exemplifies early youth-focused CSR, fostering self-expression through arts in the Federal Capital Territory, aligning with arguments that arts-based initiatives effectively support youth development (Okoye, 2012).

Airtel Nigeria has historically prioritized humanitarian and infrastructural CSR, but recent efforts now emphasize youth empowerment and digital creativity through campaigns like The Voice Africa and A Reason to Imagine, reflecting a shift towards fostering innovation and artistic expression (Eweje, 2014).

The growing focus on digital creativity within CSR underscores that Africa's youth future depends on digital fluency and problem-solving skills. Telecom firms are positioned to support this by providing connectivity and platforms for creative engagement, skills development, and media exposure (Aina & Adeyemi, 2021).

Airtel Africa's partnership with Nigeria's 3MTT program supports digital skills training for 25,000 youth, illustrating a broader trend where youth-centric CSR links creativity and innovation with digital competence, even if not explicitly branded as creative CSR (Adedoyin & Aloba, 2022).

Nigerian telecoms also sponsor talent shows like The Voice Nigeria and MTN Project Fame, which serve as CSR by offering youth visibility and career opportunities in the creative arts, beyond mere brand promotion (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka & Adebawale, 2017).

Launched in 2023, Airtel's "A Reason to Imagine" marks a strategic shift towards embedding creativity and youth empowerment in CSR. Unlike traditional charity-focused efforts, it



emphasizes intangible assets like hope, imagination, and identity, positioning Airtel as a facilitator of creative potential (Airtel Africa, 2023).

The campaign uses storytelling, visual arts, and music across media to showcase African youth overcoming adversity through imagination, aligning with research on arts-based youth development's psychosocial benefits (Ballard et al., 2023). Its association with The Voice Africa further amplifies opportunities for young performers.

This reflects a move towards "transformative CSR," actively empowering individuals and fostering systemic change rather than just improving corporate image (Visser, 2010). "A Reason to Imagine" exemplifies a model that combines emotional resonance with tangible support for youth creativity.

Evidence suggests participatory, culturally relevant campaigns can enhance young people's agency and self-worth (Chan et al., 2022). While still emerging, "A Reason to Imagine" demonstrates the potential of creative CSR to inspire and empower African youth through meaningful platforms and narratives.

Theoretical Underpinning

Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM): This theory explains how people process persuasive messages (like CSR campaigns) based on their motivation and ability to think critically. It suggests that youth might engage with Airtel's creativity-focused CSR campaign either through central (thoughtful) or peripheral (superficial) processing, influencing their attitudes toward creativity.

This theory is useful for understanding how the campaign's messaging impacts attitude change based on engagement depth.

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT): SCT (by Albert Bandura) posits that people learn behaviors and attitudes by observing others (e.g., models in the campaign) and through reinforcement. Airtel's "A Reason to Imagine" could serve as a stimulus encouraging youth to model creative behaviors, shaping their attitudes through vicarious learning. It highlights the role of observational learning and the potential impact of campaign messaging on inspiring creativity.

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB): TPB suggests attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control influence intentions and actions. The CSR campaign could influence youth attitudes toward creativity, affecting their perceived ability to engage in creative activities and shaping their intentions to act creatively. It is useful for linking the campaign's influence to potential changes in behaviour among youth.

Attitude formation and change are central to how media campaigns influence youth, and theories like the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) offer key insights. ELM explains persuasion via the central route (thoughtful evaluation) and the peripheral route (superficial cues), with youth often more influenced by peripheral cues like celebrity endorsements (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Slater & Rouner, 2002). SCT emphasizes observational learning and modeling, where youth imitate behaviors seen rewarded in media, especially influenced by peers and influencers (Bandura, 1986; 2001). Moreover, repeated exposure to consistent messaging can activate *cognitive schemas* and



reinforce existing beliefs or stereotypes, a process also explained by *cultivation theory* (Gerbner et al., 2002). This is especially evident in campaigns that normalize prosocial behavior or challenge harmful norms over time. Applying these theories, media campaigns such as Airtel Nigeria's 'A Reason to Imagine' can strategically craft messages that resonate cognitively and socially, fostering lasting attitude change toward youth creativity.

These theories are well-established in communication and social psychology, providing a solid foundation for analyzing how CSR campaigns like "A Reason to Imagine" shape attitudes.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the survey research method was chosen as the appropriate scientific approach, serving as a guide for effective data generation. The study population comprised 1,402,429 youths in Imo State, 739,659 males and 662,770 females, derived from the 2012 National Baseline Youth Survey by the National Bureau of Statistics and the Federal Ministry of Youth Development, specifically from table 56 on youth distribution (ages 18-35) by state and sex. It represents youths in Owerri Senatorial Zone (Imo East), including Aboh Mbaise, Ahiazu Mbaise, Ezinihitte Mbaise, Ikeduru, Mbaitoli, Ngor-Okpala, Owerri Municipal, Owerri North, and Owerri West.

A sample size of 385 was calculated using the Calculator.net online tool, based on a 95% confidence level, 5% margin of error, and a population proportion of 50%. According to Wimmer & Dominic (2000), cited in Owuamalam (2012), a sample of 385 falls between good and very good for this study.

Data collection was conducted through a questionnaire consisting mainly of closed-ended questions in English. The structured format limited responses to predefined options, reducing response time and increasing response rate. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale: strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), strongly disagree (2), disagree (1). Part A gathered demographic data, while Part B addressed the research questions: Items 1-5 on demographics, Items 6-8 on the first research question, Items 9-10 on the second, and Items 11-13 on the third.

To ensure validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by two independent experts in testing and measurement, ensuring alignment with research objectives. Additionally, five copies were tested with youths in Owerri North and Owerri Municipal, confirming clarity and understanding without ambiguity.

Reliability was assessed through the test-retest method. Data collection lasted two weeks, with four research assistants distributing and collecting questionnaires on the spot. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics; tables, frequency counts, means, percentages, and standard deviations, which are suitable for summarizing and interpreting the findings. Chi-square tests were employed for hypothesis testing.



RESULTS/FINDINGS

Hypotheses One

H₁: There is a significant relationship between exposure to Airtel Nigeria's "A Reason to Imagine" CSR campaign and positive attitudes towards creativity among youths in Owerri Senatorial Zone.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between exposure to Airtel Nigeria's "A Reason to Imagine" CSR campaign and positive attitudes towards creativity among youths in Owerri Senatorial Zone.

TESTED DATA: Quantitative data collected from questions 5 and 13 in the questionnaire as presented in Charts 1 & 8

Contingency Table 5: Merged data from Charts 1 and 8

Response	Awareness of and exposure to ad campaign		Positive Attitudes towards Creativity		Total
	Frequency observed	Frequency expected	Frequency observed	Frequency expected	
1	225	120	15	120	240
2	138	84	30	84	168
3	11	50.5	90	50.5	101
4	-	70	140	70	140
5	-	49.5	99	49.5	99
Total	374	374	374	374	748

Table 6: Computational Table for Hypothesis One

	Fo	Fe	fo-fe	(fo-fe) ²	(fo-fe) ² /fe
	225	120	105	11,025	91.88
	138	84	54	2,916	34.71
	11	50.5	-39.5	1,560.25	30.90
	0	70	-70	4,900	70
	0	49.5	-49.5	2,450.25	49.5
	15	120	-105	11,025	91.88
	30	84	-54	2,916	34.71
	90	50.5	39.5	1,560.25	30.896
	140	70	70	4,900	70
	99	49.5	49.5	2,450.25	49.5
Total	748	748			χ²=554.01

$$\chi^2_{\text{calculated}} = \sum \frac{(fo-fe)^2}{fe} = 554.01$$

$$DF = (\text{number of rows} - 1) \times (\text{number of columns} - 1) = (5-1) \times (2-1) = 4 \times 1 = 4$$



Quantitative research data collected and as presented in tables 24 and 5 were used in testing Hypothesis One. At 0.05 significance level and 4DF, the critical value is 9.488. The critical value (9.488) is less than the calculated χ^2 value (554.01). Therefore, the research Null Hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, while the Alternate Hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. Based on the inference from the test statistics, we conclude that there is a significant relationship between exposure to Airtel Nigeria's "A Reason to Imagine" CSR campaign and positive attitudes towards creativity among youths in Owerri Senatorial Zone.

Hypotheses Two

H2: The level of awareness of Airtel Nigeria's "A Reason to Imagine" CSR campaign significantly influence youths' attitudes towards creativity in Owerri Senatorial Zone.

H_0 : The level of awareness of Airtel Nigeria's "A Reason to Imagine" CSR campaign does not significantly influence youths' attitudes towards creativity in Owerri Senatorial Zone.

Table 7: Familiarity with key message of 'A reason to Imagine' ad campaign

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1 = Not familiar at all	10	2.7%
2 = Slightly familiar	15	4.0%
3 = Moderately familiar	15	4.0%
4 = Familiar	89	23.8%
5 = Very familiar	245	65.50%
Total	374	100%

Table 8: Respondents' likelihood to pursue a creative career in the future

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
0 Not at all	15	4%
1-3 Not very likely	40	10.7%
4-5 Very likely	72	19.3%
6-10 Extremely likely	247	66%
Total	374	100%

Source: Field data, 2024

Table 9: Contingency Table: Merged data from Charts 3 and 6

Response	Familiarity with key message of 'A reason to Imagine' ad campaign		Likelihood to pursue a creative career in the future		Total
	Frequency observed	Frequency expected	Frequency observed	Frequency expected	
1	10	12.5	15	12.5	25
2	15	27.5	40	27.5	55
3	15	7.5	0	7.5	15
4	89	80.5	72	80.5	161
5	245	246	247	246	492
Total	374	374	374	374	748

**Table 10: Computational Table for Hypothesis Two**

	fo	Fe	fo-fe	(fo-fe) ²	(fo-fe) ² /fe
	10	12.5	-2.5	6.25	0.5
	15	27.5	-12.5	156.25	5.68
	15	7.5	7.5	56.25	7.5
	89	80.5	8.5	72.25	0.90
	245	246	-1	1	0.004
	15	12.5	2.5	6.25	0.5
	40	27.5	12.5	156.25	5.68
	0	7.5	-7.5	56.25	7.5
	72	80.5	-8.5	72.25	0.90
	247	246	1	1	0.004
Total	748	748			$\chi^2=29.76$

Quantitative research data collected and as presented in charts 3 and 6, as indicated with data in Tables 5 & 6, were used in testing Hypothesis Two. At 0.05 significance level and 4DF, the critical value is 9.488. The critical value (9.488) is less than the calculated χ^2 value (29.76). Therefore, the research Null Hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, while the Alternate Hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. Based on the inference from the test statistics, we conclude that the level of awareness of Airtel Nigeria's "A Reason to Imagine" CSR campaign significantly influence youths' attitudes towards creativity in Owerri Senatorial Zone.

Hypotheses Three

H3: Participation level in the campaign does affect attitude towards creativity.

H_{03} : Participation level in the campaign does not affect attitude towards creativity.

Table 11: Participation Level in the Campaign

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not at all involved	30	8.0%
Slightly involved	50	13.4%
Moderately involved	80	21.4%
Highly involved	100	26.7%
Very highly involved	114	30.5%
Total	374	100%

Table 12: Frequency of engagement in creative activities (photography, design, music, dance, writing, etc) after watching 'A Reason to Imagine'

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Daily	92	24.6%
Weekly	122	32.6%
Monthly	80	21.4%
Rarely	70	18.7%
Never	10	2.7%
Total	374	100%

**Table 13: Contingency Table: Merged data from Charts 11 and 9**

Response	Participation Level in the Campaign		Frequency of Engagement in Creative Activities after Watching the campaign message		Total
	Frequency observed	Frequency expected	Frequency observed	Frequency expected	
1	30	61	92	61	122
2	50	86	122	86	172
3	80	80	80	80	160
4	100	85	70	85	170
5	114	62	10	62	124
Total	374	374	374	374	748

Table 14: Computational Table for Hypothesis Two

	fo	Fe	fo-fe	(fo-fe) ²	(fo-fe) ² /fe
	30	61	-31	961	15.74
	50	86	-36	1296	15.07
	80	80	0	0	0
	100	85	15	225	2.65
	114	62	52	2704	43.61
	92	61	31	961	15.74
	122	86	36	1296	15.07
	80	80	0	0	0
	70	85	-15	225	2.65
	10	62	-52	2704	43.61
Total	748	748			$\chi^2 = 154.14$

Quantitative research data collected and as presented in charts 11 and 9, as indicated with data in Tables 11 & 12, were used in testing Hypothesis Three. At 0.05 significance level and 4DF, the critical value is 9.488. The critical value (9.488) is less than the calculated χ^2 value (154.14). Therefore, the research Null Hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, while the Alternate Hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. Based on the inference from the test statistics, we conclude that participation level in the campaign does affect attitude towards creativity.

DISCUSSION

Quantitative research data collected and as presented in charts 3 and 6, as indicated with data in Tables 5 & 6, were used in testing **Hypothesis One**. The statistical test showed that the Chi-square value far exceeded the Critical Value, leading to the rejection of the Null Hypothesis and acceptance of the Alternate Hypothesis. At 0.05 significance level and 4DF, the critical value is 9.488. The critical value (9.488) is less than the calculated χ^2 value (29.76). Therefore, the research Null Hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, while the Alternate



Hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. Based on the inference from the test statistics, we conclude that the level of awareness of Airtel Nigeria's "*A Reason to Imagine*" CSR campaign significantly influence youths' attitudes towards creativity in Owerri Senatorial Zone.

Findings also indicate that the respondents frequently engaged themselves in creative activities after being constantly exposed to the Airtel Nigeria's 'A Reason to Imagine'. This is in conformity with the Advertising Effectiveness Model which suggests that advertising can lead to attention, interest, desire, and action among consumers. It explains how advertising influences consumer behaviour. The youths of Owerri Senatorial zone have been found to be exposed to the campaign executed through series of ads, which caught their attention and stimulated their interest in creative adventures. Field data shows it further spurred their desire to explore their creative intelligence and move creative boundaries. It is this desire that further led them to act on it by venturing into creative pursuits such as Art, literature, dance, writing, music, design, etc. as indicated in Table 16.

This finding is also in parity with the Cultivation Theory which rules that individuals who invest more time in watching television (campaign ads) are prone to perceive the real world (A world without creative limits) through a lens aligning with the prevalent depictions in television messages (A Reason to Imagine), in contrast with their counterparts with lower television viewership (those who are unexposed to the ad campaign 'A Reason to Imagine') but comparable demographic profiles.

Quantitative research data collected and as presented in charts 3 and 6, as indicated with data in Tables 5 & 6, were used in testing **Hypothesis Two**. At 0.05 significance level and 4DF, the Table value is 9.488. The Table value (9.488) is less than the Calculated χ^2 value (29.76). Therefore, the research Null Hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, while the Alternate Hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. Based on the inference from the test statistics, we conclude that the level of awareness of Airtel Nigeria's "*A Reason to Imagine*" CSR campaign significantly influence youths' attitudes towards creativity in Owerri Senatorial Zone.

This finding is also in uniformity with the cultivation theory which hinges on the idea that increased exposure to television content (as in the case of 'A Reason to Imagine' ad campaign), marked by recurring patterns of messages and images (the variables explored in the campaign ads 'creativity without borders'), cultivates shifts (attention, interest, desire, and action towards creativity) in individuals' perceptions. This transformative process extends beyond mere entertainment, playing a pivotal role in shaping the cultural fabric by reinforcing shared assumptions about the world.

Quantitative research data collected and as presented in charts 11 and 9, as indicated with data in Tables 11 & 12, were used in testing **Hypothesis Three**. At 0.05 significance level and 4DF, the critical value is 9.488. The critical value (9.488) is less than the calculated χ^2 value (154.14). Therefore, the research Null Hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, while the Alternate Hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. Based on inference from the test statistics, we conclude that participation level in the campaign does affect attitude towards creativity. This can be understood through the Social Cognitive Theory, which postulates that observing and engaging with models and messages in the CSR campaign shapes attitudes and behaviours. SCT suggests that behaviour is a product of personal, environmental, and behavioural factors. Its unique feature is the emphasis on social influence and its emphasis on external and internal social reinforcement. All these factors can be stimulated by advertising, as is



indicated to have been achieved by the “A Reason to Imagine” campaign. Personal factors such as Imo youths’ beliefs, values, and attitudes, has been changed through the campaign ‘A Reason to Imagine’. Environmental factors such as the social and physical context in which the behaviour takes place, has also been influenced by the campaign. Behavioural factors which involve engaging in creative activities have also been modified through the campaign ads. The campaign provided models inspirational narratives that youths identified with, encouraging positive perceptions. Additionally, the Theory of Planned Behaviour explains that awareness and belief in the value of creativity, encouraged by the campaign, increases the intention and positive attitudes towards engagement in creative activities. Therefore, the findings demonstrate that effective awareness-raising through CSR campaigns can significantly shape youth attitudes by influencing their beliefs, behaviours, and perceptions of creativity. TBT supports the idea that attitudes, such as positivity towards creativity, are shaped by beliefs and intentions, which are influenced by the campaign’s message. The campaign’s ability to modify youth perceptions demonstrates its role in shaping attitudes through modeling and intentional belief change.

This finding is also in consonance with the Social Learning Theory which posits that individuals learn behaviors and attitudes through observation, imitation and modeling of others. Evidence from field data proves that youths in Owerri Senatorial Zone shaped their attitudes and behaviour towards creative pursuits through what they observed in the key messages of the ad campaign. They imitated the models portrayed in the ads and began the adventure of bringing their creative dreams to reality.

IMPLICATIONS TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

This study calls attention to the critical role of CSR campaigns like Airtel Nigeria’s ‘A Reason to Imagine’ in shaping youth attitudes towards creativity, offering valuable insights for both academic research and practical application. For researchers, it high-spots the need for further empirical investigations into the long-term effects of corporate-led creative initiatives on youth development, social identity, and economic participation within Nigeria and similar emerging markets. Future research should also explore the interplay of regional, cultural, and socio-economic factors that influence campaign efficacy, employing diverse methodologies to deepen understanding.

From a practical standpoint, the findings advocate for corporations and policymakers to prioritize sustained, culturally relevant, and participatory CSR strategies that actively involve youths in creative processes. Such approaches can foster genuine empowerment, innovation, and social cohesion. Practitioners should leverage the insights to design targeted campaigns that incorporate local narratives and digital platforms, thereby maximizing engagement and fostering a sustainable culture of creativity among Nigerian youth. Ultimately, integrating these strategies into broader youth development frameworks can significantly contribute to Nigeria’s socio-economic growth and cultural renaissance.

For Corporate Practitioners: Develop culturally resonant, participatory campaigns that promote creativity, representation, and opportunity for youth.

For Policymakers: Integrate creative arts and media literacy into youth development policies, supported by CSR initiatives.



For Scholars: Further research should explore longitudinal impacts, regional differences, and digital media's role in shaping youth perceptions.

CONCLUSION

This study high-spot the transformative potential of CSR campaigns like Airtel's 'A Reason to Imagine' in shaping youth attitudes towards creativity. By increasing awareness and providing relatable models, such initiatives influence perceptions, ignite interest, and motivate active engagement in creative pursuits. The findings reinforce the idea that well-designed CSR efforts can foster a culture of innovation, empowering young people to see creativity as a vital part of their identity and future. Ultimately, such campaigns serve as catalysts for positive attitude shifts, contributing to broader societal and cultural development.

RECOMMENDATION

1. **Enhance Strategic Partnership Engagement:** Airtel and similar corporations should develop long-term collaborations with educational institutions, creative hubs, and youth organisations to create tailored CSR programmes that promote creativity. These partnerships can facilitate workshops, mentorship schemes, and talent incubators that directly engage youth in practical creative projects, thus translating awareness into sustained behavioural change.
2. **Jump Heavily on Digital and Social Media Platforms:** Given the high exposure and influence of digital media on youth, CSR campaigns should integrate interactive online content, such as virtual challenges, creative competitions, and influencer partnerships, to deepen engagement. This approach aligns with the Elaboration Likelihood Model, ensuring messages are delivered through channels that maximise impact, making creativity more accessible and appealing.
3. **Embed Cultural Relevance and Local Narratives:** CSR campaigns must incorporate local cultural themes, stories, and role models to resonate more deeply with youth audiences. This contextualisation enhances the Social Cognitive Theory's premise by providing relatable models, reinforcing positive attitudes towards creativity, and nurturing local talent, thereby contributing to sustainable cultural development.
4. **Promote Policy Advocacy for Creative Education:** Stakeholders should advocate for policies that integrate creative arts into school curricula, supported by CSR funding. This systemic approach ensures that creative skills are nurtured from an early age, complementing campaign efforts and creating an environment conducive to innovation and self-expression beyond short-term campaigns.



FUTURE RESEARCH

Longitudinal studies are recommended to assess the sustainability of attitude changes. Comparative research across different Nigerian regions and demographic groups can deepen understanding. Investigating the role of digital platforms in expanding campaign reach and impact is also suggested. In essence, future studies should explore the longitudinal impact of CSR campaigns like 'A Reason to Imagine' on youth creativity and social attitudes over time. Investigating how sustained exposure to such campaigns influences not only perceptions but also tangible creative outputs and career choices among Nigerian youths can provide deeper insights into the transformative potential of corporate social responsibility. Additionally, comparative research across different regions and age groups within Nigeria could uncover regional and demographic variations in campaign effectiveness. Employing mixed-method approaches that combine quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews or focus groups would enrich understanding of the nuanced ways in which CSR initiatives shape youth identity, motivation, and participation in creative industries. Such comprehensive research would be invaluable for designing more targeted and impactful CSR strategies that foster genuine and lasting empowerment of young people.

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APPENDIX

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Gender

response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	173	46.3%
Female	201	53.7%
Total	374	100%

Source: Field data, 2024

Table 2: Age Bracket

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-35	150	40.1%
26-30	120	32.1%
31-35	80	21.4%
36 & above	24	6.4%
Total	374	100%

Source: Field data, 2024

Table 3: Educational Level

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Undergraduate	160	42.8%
Bachelor's Degree	140	37.4%
Postgraduate	10	2.7%
Uneducated	50	13.4%
Other (Please specify)	14	3.7%
Total	374	100%

Source: Field data, 2024

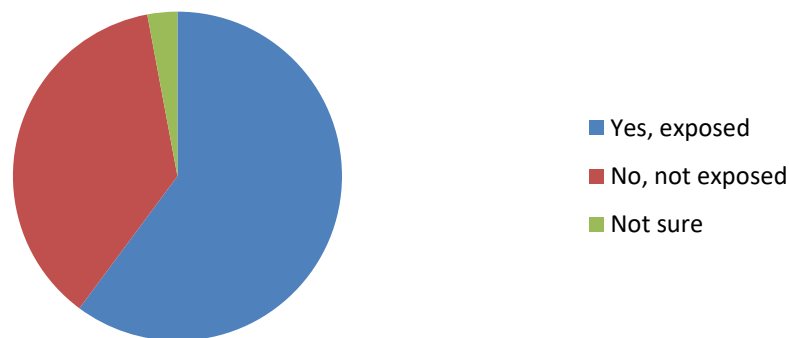
Table 4: Occupation

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Office Job	100	26.7%
Entrepreneur	120	32.1%
Unemployed	130	34.8%
Other (Please specify)	24	6.4%
Total	374	100%

Source: Field data, 2024

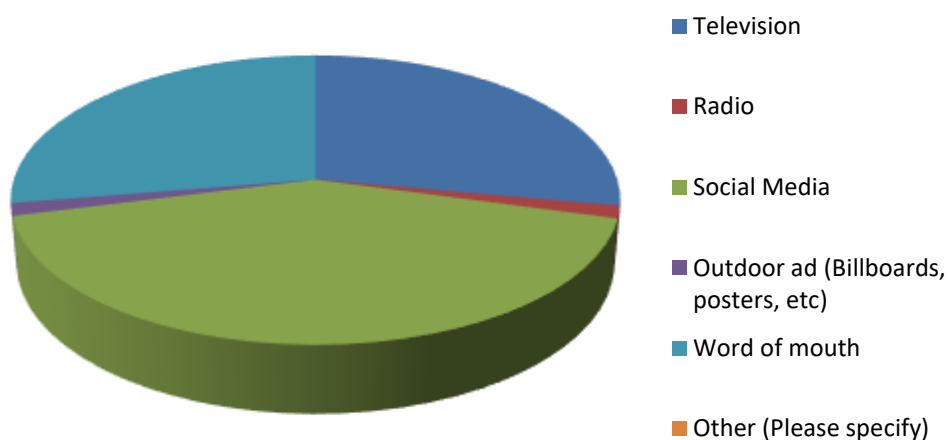
Analysis of Key Research Variables

Respondents' awareness of and exposure to "A reason to Imagine"



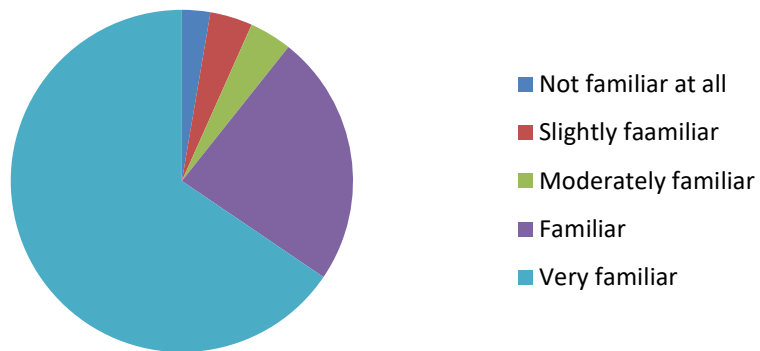
Source: *Field data, 2024*

Medium of exposure to Airtel Nigeria's 'A reason to Imagine'



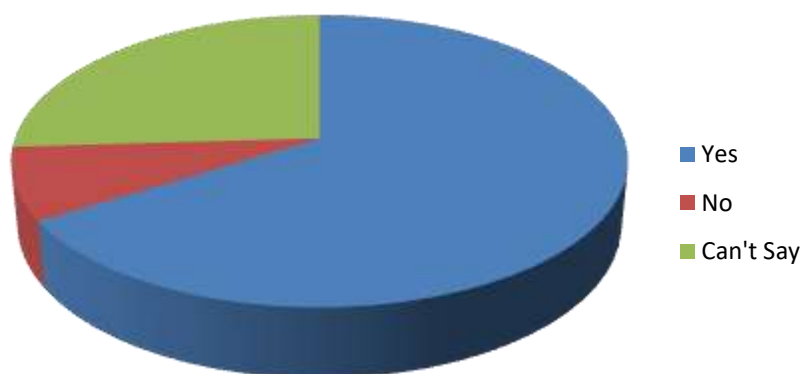
Source: *Field data, 2024*

Familiarity with Key Message of 'A Reason to Imagine' Campaign



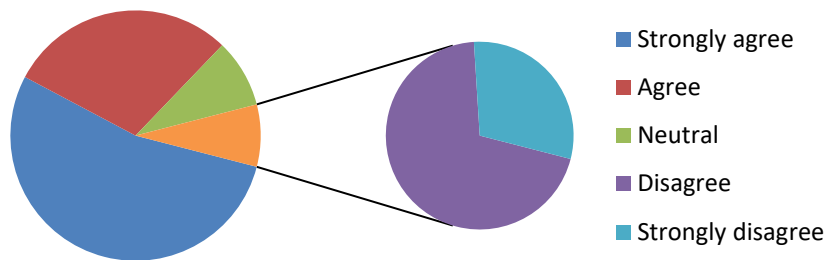
Source: Field data, 2024

Airtel as a Brand that Supports Creativity

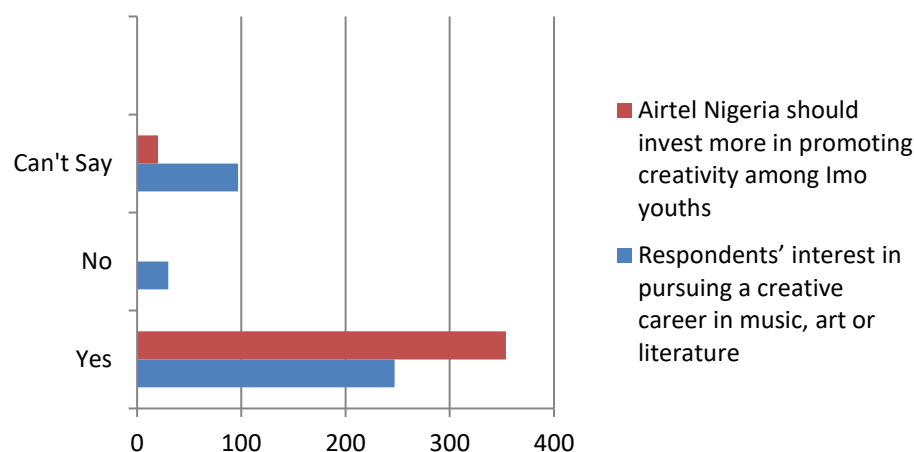


Source: Field data, 2024

'A reason to Imagine' effectively communicates its intended message of creativity and imagination

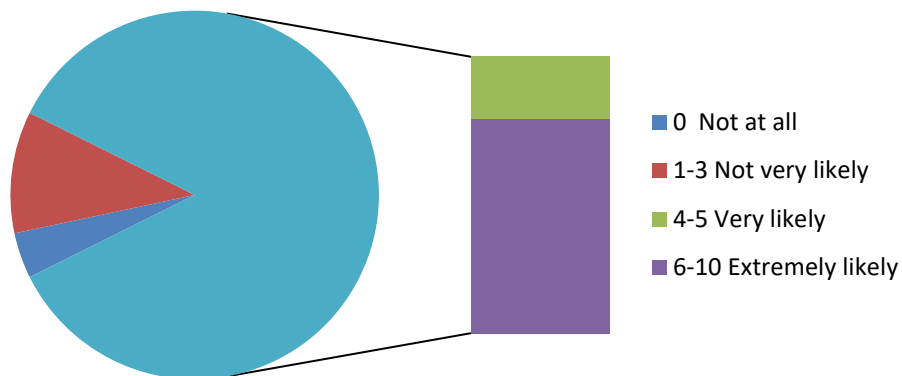


Source: Field data, 2024



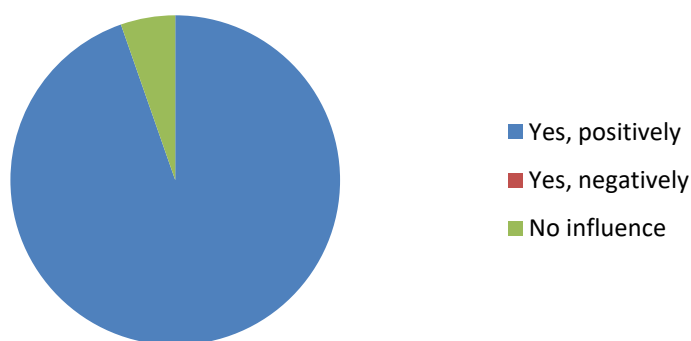
Source: Field data, 2024

Respondents' likelihood to pursue a creative career in the future



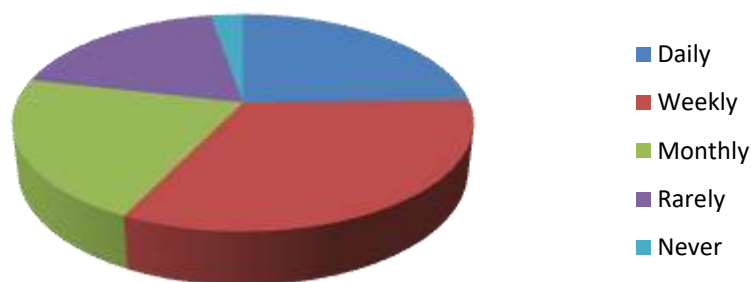
Source: Field data, 2024

Has the 'A reason to Imagine' influenced your own creative aspirations?



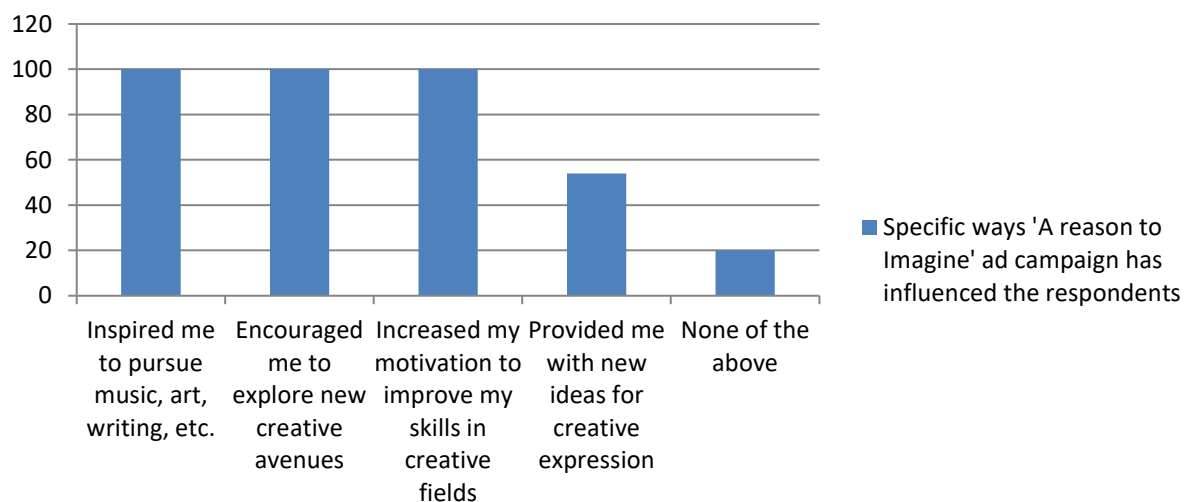
Source: Field data, 2024

How often respondents engage in creative activities such as photography, design, music, dance, writing after watching 'A Reason to Imagine'

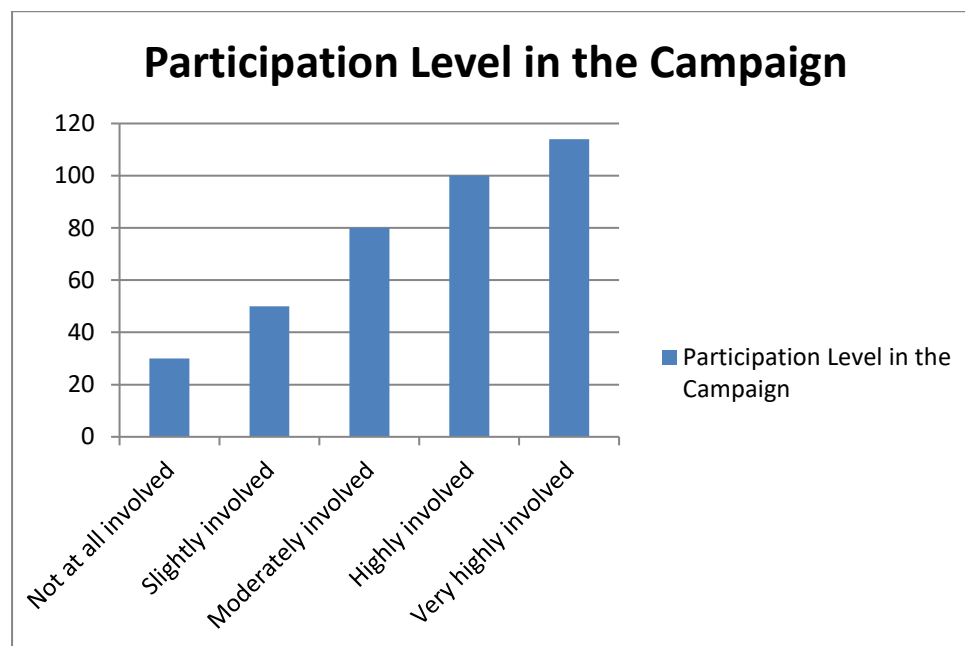


Source: Field data, 2024

Specific ways 'A reason to Imagine' campaign has influenced the respondents



Source: Field data, 2024



FIGURES



Airtel Nigeria presenting prizes to the 10 winners of its 'Imagine with Airtel' competition.