

From viral videos to big bucks: How Nigerian skit-makers make money – A conversation with Olufemi Oguntamu

In 2023, Ali Baba, one of Nigeria's veteran comedians, nearly broke the internet when he shared that popular Nigerian skit-maker, Mark Angel earned over \$300,000 monthly from his YouTube videos. The 32-year-old creator, became an internet sensation in 2016 when skits of antics with his little cousin Emmanuella started going viral.

Temps de lecture : minute

3 July 2024

This article was originally published on [TechCabal](#).

Skit-making is almost synonymous with comedy in Nigeria today. What started as a niche industry is now the third-largest entertainment industry in the country, worth about ₦50 billion (\$34 million). At first, the process of creating this content was basic, requiring only a cell phone, editing skills and an internet connection. Now, as the industry grows and becomes more global, the skit-making process has become more complex; requiring larger teams, more money to execute, and a more strategic plan.

For over six years, Olufemi Oguntamu, CEO of Penzaarville Africa, has worked in the Nigerian creator space. His company, a talent management and media agency, is responsible for some of the biggest content creators and skit-makers in the country, including Broda Shaggi, Kie Kie, and Mr Macaroni, among others.

According to Oguntamu, structure is a very important part of creating, and the production for some of the ten-minute skits we see on social media is often as elaborate as movie productions, with large teams responsible for execution.

According to a report published by Selar, in which they surveyed 2,000 digital creators, 29.3% of creators start hiring immediately after entering the business, while the majority of the sample study size, 37.6%, hired staff after six months. Due to the nature of their job, which requires a constant churn out of high-quality content, many creators often need to hire people to work with them to meet this demand. While production needs and costs differ from creator to creator, it's almost impossible to do the work alone, no matter how small the project is.

“We have videographers, supporting actors, scriptwriters, production managers and assistants, make-up artists and costumiers, gaffers, and sometimes even a director,” he shared. “Sometimes, for the more popular creators, like *Brodda Shaggi* or Layi, we also hire security guards as shooting outdoors in Lagos can draw a lot of unwanted attention.”

Talent is often hired on a project basis, but some are more permanent than others, like production managers, who handle everything from liaising with other talent to planning and managing the creator's time. The permanent employees are paid salaries, while other talents like videographers and makeup artists are paid on a project basis. Even after shooting, the post-production crew takes over; from the editors to special effects guys, to those who specialise in colour-grading. These people are hired to handle the post-production of these videos and digital products before they are ready for distribution.

Many creators have different reasons for hiring, though the most obvious seems to be not having enough time to handle all the responsibilities that come with the job. The report from Selar confirms this:

“Out of all the creators that had people working for them, 3 out of 5 creators considered hiring a team because they did not have enough time.”

On average, it takes about a week to produce and release a skit, and the costs can vary from between ₦800,000 to ₦1 million per skit on average, according to Oguntamu.

The effort put into these skits comes with a lot of material rewards. These skits attract millions of viewers and engagement to their social media pages. In 2023, Mark Angel gained over 197 million views on his Instagram account, which currently has about 3.15 million followers. Newcomer, Layi Wasabi, had the second-highest engagement, with 133.2 million views and 1.6 million followers, while Sabinus had 130 million views in total.

These numbers translate beyond stats to real money as these creators or skit-makers charge big bucks for promotion. Skitmakers can charge as high as ₦3 - 5 million for sponsored posts on Instagram, according to Oguntamu. Platforms like Facebook and YouTube offer direct monetisation options where they pay creators directly for their content.

“YouTube is a big market. Apart from monetising, it opens you up to a larger audience, even outside Africa. It’s interesting to note that creators who have a large audience outside Africa in places like Asia, Europe, and America, are paid more than those who have the majority of their audience residing here in Africa.”

Oguntamu adds that in order for creators to maximise their monetisation opportunities, it’s important for skit-makers to find their niche, and build a brand in order to be able to secure brand ambassadorships and partnerships when the proverbial stream of advertorial income dries up.

Beyond platform monetisation, there are ample opportunities available for creators. Endorsement deals, brand collaborations, and even physical appearances.



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