



Exploring reasons Kenya television broadcasts Nollywood movies

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Abstract

This paper sought to explore why Kenya television airs Nollywood movies. The study adopted a qualitative research method. It targeted Citizen and Kiss Televisions' production managers, focus groups and Nigerian Movie fans. The households were selected randomly. The research consulted documentary sources on Nigerian movies in Kenya. This included gathering information from the internet, Newspapers and research was done by Synovate on Nigerian movie audiences. The obtained data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean, mode, percentages, and frequencies. The study concludes that given Nollywood's great influence on African culture, such an effect is reinforced by the massive consumption of Nigerian movies by Kenyans and Africa as a whole. Many Nigerian video films are filled with religious overtones; therefore, many Africans watch most Nigerian movies. These films portray values rooted in their countries of origin. Nigerian video films, as a representation of Nigerian culture, greatly influence an entire population of Africans due to similar cultural practices. The study recommends that Nigerian moviemakers emphasise African culture's positive sides in their movies. This should be inclusive of marriage ceremonies, the bride prize, family dissolutions, the place of girl/boy child in the African context, African foods and so on. On the other hand, filmmakers should have fewer films on barbaric themes like witchcraft, human sacrifice, and blood thirst vampires. These kinds of movies portray Africa in a Negative way.

Key Terms: Eye opener, films, moviemakers.

INTRODUCTION

Nollywood is the name given to the Nigerian film industry, and it is the 3rd highest grossing movie-making industry after Hollywood and the Indian film industry, “Bollywood,” respectively. However, no one could claim exactly how and when the name “Nollywood” was first conceptualised or used to describe the Nigerian movie industry. The name “Nollywood” was invented by a non-Nigerian, first appearing in an article by Matt Steinglass in the *New York Times* in 2002 and continued to be imposed by foreigners to Nigeria. Nollywood is an example of Nigeria living up to its potential role as the leader of Africa. According to the Nigeria Censor Board, 1,080 videos were marketed between 1997 and 2000 (Mwanthi, 2012).

Since it first appeared at the beginning of the 21st century, the Nigerian film industry has had profound name recognition among Africans, the Diaspora and the world. The movie, *Living in Bondage*, produced by Ken Nwabue in 1992, set the pace for the emergence of Nollywood. Nigerian video film stories are told using African idioms, proverbs, costumes, artefacts, cultural displays, and the imagery of Africa. The common Nigerian video film genres include horror, comedy, urban legend, mythic parable, love and romance, juju, witchcraft, melodrama, and historical epic. Movie production helps to determine the differences and transformations that have occurred in Nigeria. Nollywood has been generally beneficial in terms of promoting African culture, dignity, and social justice in Africa. The oral literature and corpus of songs, festivals, rituals, traditional religion, music, performing arts, dance, and the entire range of artefacts constituting the traditional oral performance of culture in Nigeria are represented in Nigerian movies. The emergence of Nollywood movies on Kenyan television, which are very popular today and also alluring to many Kenyans, has created a need for an explorative study of why Kenyan television air Nollywood movies (Krings et al., 2013).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nollywood films are packed with simple but dramatic storylines. ““Ah, you want to kill me now!” The woman yanks her hair wildly, her facial expression alive and contorted dramatically. “No, not me, not today!” Her body shudders, and in seconds, she is

transformed into a vicious sleek mongrel, emitting blood-curdling growls.” (p.12). She goes on to say that this is a scene from a typical Nigerian movie - and in many Sub-Saharan countries, their popularity is growing tremendously, leaving fans burning with a longing for more. Muchinba (2004) adds that the stories tend to be rather plain although very dramatic and full of emotions: the women yell and are covetous money lovers; on the other end, the men are just as emotional and very revengeful:

Throw in a gibbering bone-rattling juju man and Bible-waving preacher, and what you have is a brew of conflict, revenge, trials and tribulations - the likes of which are keeping most Zambians, especially in the capital city, Lusaka, glued to TV screens for hours on end. (p.12)

According to Wednesday Nigerian Movie article (2005), Nollywood films tend to be full of moralising messages and cautionary tales in which citizens receive serious warnings about the perilous consequences of infidelity, crime and greed. The video films are hugely popular with Nigerian women, who are overwhelmingly the cinema’s main consumers. The films are kin to the American melodrama genre of the 1940s and 1950s, often reflecting shifting roles for women, at once expected to move forward while remaining true to archaic and rigid gender roles.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research method. The study targeted Citizen and Kiss Televisions’ production managers, focus groups and Nigerian Movie fans. These households were selected randomly. In addition, the research consulted documentary sources on Nigerian movies in Kenya. This included gathering information from the internet, Newspapers and research done by Synovate on Nigerian movie audiences. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean, mode, percentages, and frequencies.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Nigerian Movie Audiences as an Entertainment Tool

The production managers for both Citizen and Kiss Television said that they air Nigerian movies to entertain families. To entertain these families, they must select movies that are family-friendlier with no

adult scenes like nudity and profane language. They also select movies of good quality, with quality pictures and so on. They both agreed that Nigerian movies are packed with drama, which is a common scenario in most families in Kenya. Therefore, the audience connects with the drama in Nigerian Movies, which is why they like them. They observed that the prominent reason why they air Nigerian movies is for entertainment. Nigerian movies entertain the audience; this makes the audience to be glued to the television channels, thus enabling them to maintain their audiences. She believes that through airing Nigerian movies, citizen Television has fostered positive values in her audiences because apart from entertainment, Nigerian movies offer moral lessons and act as an eye opener to the audiences on how to face unexpected situations should they face them. The citizen, Television Production manager, was of the opinion that the storylines of the Nigerian movies have contributed to the popularity of Nigerian movies as they have everything from romance, betrayal, witchcraft, religion, murder, history, revenge and folklore.

The Transmitter of African Culture

Cultures are the creation of human interaction. Culture is something we learn; we are not born with it. He writes that changes in human society reflect the dynamism of culture. This dynamism is responsible for constant change in patterns associated with given cultures, and the multicultural character of most, if not all, societies substantially widens the range for influence on such cultures (Hall, 2005).

Nigerian video films are deeply rooted in Nigerian cultural traditions and social texts that focus on Nigerian community life. A number of respondents said that they appreciate Nigerian movies because many Nollywood movies are told using African idioms, proverbs, costumes, artefacts, cultural displays, and the imagery of Africa. Some of the sayings quoted by respondents were as follows:

‘A frog does not run in the daylight unless something is after it.’

‘What an old man can see while seated, a child or a young person cannot see while on top of a tree.’

‘An adult does not watch a goat deliver while still tethered.’

‘A hunter who has only one arrow does not shoot with careless aim.’

‘A farmer does not boast that he has had a good harvest until his stock of yams lasts till the following harvest season.’

‘Success is 10% ability and 90% sweat.’

‘When the right-hand washes the left hand and the left-hand washes the right hand, both hands become clean.’

‘One does not become a master diviner in a day. A forest is not made in a season. The swoop of an eagle has seen many seasons and floods...’

‘A fowl does not forget where it lays its eggs.’

‘It is from a small seed that the giant Iroko tree has its beginning.’

All these proverbs, wise sayings, and many others are depicted in Nigerian movies, and they help transmit Nigerian/ African culture worldwide.

Investments and Marketing

Nigeria is a big industry, and it is ahead of the pack in Africa. It has invested in the movie industry. This is seen in the resources they use and the quality of sets in their movies. In most Nigerian movies, for example, you will find things like flashy cars, beautiful mansions and villas; they would even travel abroad to places like London and the United States to shoot their movies if they need to. The industry, mostly referred to as ‘Nollywood’ (Nigeria’s film industry), has grown to an extent where investors and the Nigerian government are planning to develop a film village in Abuja, among other investments like the Plateau Film City. They also do have systems in place for marketing their movies. Therefore, Nigeria knows that bigger budgets mean better programs and audiences.

Critics say that Nigerians show more emotions in acting than Kenyan actors and that most of our local actors lack star power due to the fact that most of them only take acting after failing in other careers. Furthermore, the quality of Nigerian movies may be nowhere near that of Hollywood, but their target market is not concerned with quality; they just want to be entertained. Lastly, Nollywood impact and transformation of Nigeria’s culture, politics, society and economy cannot be underestimated. Because of

the growing strength of Nollywood, the stakeholders are in a position to influence the Nigerian government policies.

Nigerian Movies and African Culture

The success of *Nollywood* could be attributed to the ability of present-day filmmakers to emphasise contemporary realities to which many Nigerians and Africans can relate. The cultural aspect is still present, though, *Naija's* popularity has grown fast, but this has been at the cost of the 'quality of production,' as critics put it. However, in spite of the fact that some movies are of poor quality, they are able to get away with it because of their strong storylines.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion: Given *Nollywood's* great influence over African culture, such an effect is reinforced by the

massive consumption of Nigerian movies by Kenyans and Africa as a whole. Many Nigerian video films are filled with religious overtones; therefore, many Africans see most Nigerians as these films portray values rooted in their countries of origin. Therefore, Nigerian video films, as a representation of Nigerian culture, greatly influence an entire population of Africans due to similar cultural practices.

Recommendation: Nigerian moviemakers should emphasise the positive sides of the African culture in their movies. This should be inclusive of marriage ceremonies, the bride prize, family dissolutions, the place of girl/boy child in the African context, African foods and so on. On the other hand, filmmakers should have fewer films on barbaric themes like Witchcraft, human sacrifice, and blood thirst vampires. These kinds of movies portray Africa in a Negative way.

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