



The Role of Indigenous Films in Preserving Culture in Nigeria: An Appraisal of Nollywood Home Videos

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ABSTRACT

An examination of the Nigerian society, discloses the challenge which the country's cultural system faces. Daily, our moral and cultural values is being attacked by Western ideologies and culture. This is especially propagated in our media who set agendas for the society based on Western ideologies. This research thus investigates the role of film as a medium of communication in preserving culture using a detailed examination of the performance of the Nigerian film industry and its contribution in preserving the Nigerian culture. Findings from the study show that the Nigerian film industry has failed to preserve the great heritage of Nigerians. Finally the paper suggests that Nigerian film makers must strive in the preservation of our culture for easy identification in the world.

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian culture has been invaded by the foreign cultures through the use of communications systems like films. History has shown that the intrusion of Western culture into the third world nations [like Nigeria] through the use of communications facilities has always been rampant.

This is because the Nigerian people have been exposed to a high range of programs and communications content which have in turn moulded their thought pattern, belief, system and actions. This means our culture has been twisted and contaminated by interference of Western values and beliefs; cultures which have been defined as the total way of life, is an integral part of any society and stands for the sum-total of existence of a particular group of people dealing with their past, their present and a projected insight into their immediate and distant future. It is reflected in their way of life, ranging from



religion, system of government, language, attitudes their dressing code, their expression of emotion and sadness. In essence, culture is the totality of the way of life of a people.

Nigeria is a country rich in land, people and culture. Its uniqueness lies mainly on its culture. It is not only the most populous country but also the most culturally diverse black nation. This brings us to the issues of the role of film in preserving culture in Nigeria. The Nigerian culture has suffered untold damage over the past years due to cultural imperialism which has crept into the society via communication facilities like radio, films etc. Due to this the Nigerian people have been forced to embrace the Western culture. Since culture is an integral part of the society and cannot be forgone, this study expresses the important of the medium as an instrument for the preservation of the Nigerian culture through its film house Nollywood.

Culture is as old as man. It was probably created out of man's desire to live in an organized world. Every society has a culture which they hold on to. Nigeria perhaps is one of the most culturally diverse countries in Africa having well over 300 ethnic groups each with their own uniqueness. An x-ray of the Nigerian society will reveal a picture of cultural infection which is gradually decaying. All these are borne out of the fact that we have not understood our culture enough to uphold its values. Apart from the fact that this has brought untold crises, pain and hardship upon Nigerian people, it has also stunted the growth of this sector [culture]. There is a need to look into this problem and proffer solutions. This brings us to the issues of the role of film in preserving culture. The introduction of films into our society has seldom failed to shake centuries old cultural practices, simple lifestyles, social integration and economic pattern. Often the benefits of modern communications which disseminate unfamiliar, vivid, absorbing information and entertainment originated in urban centers and more often than not from foreign places have been accompanied by negative influences which can dramatically disturb established orders. It should be noted that it is not only the media but the messages that is important and conditions must be created for national mass media and communication system to carry the cultural message of the nation. Communication system and the way they are used can pose a threat to cultural identity in most countries; if not all because communication is a part of culture as much as an influence upon it. The development of a national communication system can help to foster a thriving national culture. The importance of any organ of the mass media in the society cannot be underestimated as it stands as a medium of communication. Film is perhaps the most universally, appealing and more effective. A well planned film rises above certain barriers by its use of pictures, music and sound conveying messages to people or audience of different background. What this means is that what we fail to understand through our traditional media we



understand through film, No wonder Enahoro writes that, they are concerned with distribution of power in the society and the domination of certain interest over others. Therefore if films are a powerful media of communication it means that it could be effective in communicating a people's culture to them.

For a long time the Nigerian people have been exposed to a lot of foreign cultures via communication media. It is therefore assumed that to correct this, an effective tool of communication must be utilized and film is that medium. Film has also been viewed as a potent medium of communication through which messages ranging from indoctrination, education, entertainment, integrations, information, mobilization etc, can be relayed to people to achieve certain objectives. They have the power to re-direct and reposition the psyche of an average man. Films have an inexplicable bond between itself and their audiences willing suspend disbelief when viewing a film. The power of films on its audience makes it a viable tool for preserving culture. Nigerian film makers can reposition Nigerian's dented image by making film that will promote Nigeria's culture abroad.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following theory has been found relevant to this paper.

Cultural Imperialism Theory

The term imperialism always provokes negative reaction; it does refer to a real dilemma that pits western nations against those of the third world. According to Dennis (1983) media imperialism results in cultural imperialism and implants western ideas and values, thus upsetting natural evolutionary development"

Culture as a word is credited to the British anthropologist, sir Edward Taylor. He defined culture as that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society:. Of more relevance to this discussion is the definition by the word Book Encyclopedia. It say that,

Culture consists of all the ideas, objects and ways of doing things created by a group. These include arts, beliefs, custom innovations, language technology and tradition. Culture also consists of learned way of acting, feeling and thinking rather than biologically determined ways.



This definition particularly underscore the views that the greater or the more influential part of what makes culture is acquired or learned, and not in bore or innate. The implication of this is that culture could be learned, acquired experienced or transferred from one place to another through various ways. One of the most influential of these ways is through the film. This is where communication and mass media play a significant role in the transmission of culture. This relationship between culture and communication is clearly stated in the McBride report (1980) thus. The role of communication may be regarded as that of a major carrier of culture. The media of communication are cultural instruments which serve to promote or influence attitudes, to motivate to foster the spread of behaviour patterns, and to bring about social integration. For millions of people, they are the principal means of access of culture and to all forms of creative expression. In the modern world, mass media supply the cultural fare and shape the cultural experience of many people.

Okunna cited in Ekeanyanwu (2005) also captures this relationship thus

...given the nature of the international communication system, there have always been fears that the massive flow of Western predominantly American media culture into non-western societies of the developing world could lead to cultural domination which will distort and displace native cultures and lead to the adoption of foreign values, lifestyle and behavioural patterns.

This distortion according to Okunna is called cultural imperialism or cultural synchronization. Domatob (1988) further defined cultural synchronization as "The process through which the cultures of developing countries, such as those of Sub-Saharan African."

Cultural imperialism is therefore defined as the subtle manipulation of the mass media of underdeveloped or developing countries by the developed western capitalist nations of Europe and North American using their advanced and well developed mass media to control the behaviour lifestyles, morals, mores, arts and values of the underdeveloped or developing nations through the production and massive exportation of media software to the developing nations.

Cultural imperialism is also the subjugation of a local culture and the imposition of an alien culture on the local culture (Ekeanyanwu, 1998). Schiller, (1997) also defined cultural imperialism as "the process by which western nations dominate the media



around the world which in turn has a powerful effect on the third world countries by imposing on them western views and therefore destroying their native cultures.”

From the above definitions, it simply means that, western civilization produces the majority of the media (Film, comics, news etc.) because they have the money to do so. Therefore, third world countries are watching their media filled with the western world's ways of living, believing and thinking. The third world cultures then start to want and do the same things in their countries and thereby destroying their own culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culture is as old as man. It can be traced back to the very beginning of man's existence. Thus it has many definitions and meaning as perceived by different people. It could mean a way of life of a people or reason for the existence of a people etc. According to the penguin English dictionary in Opubor, A.E. et al (1979;31).culture is defined as "improvement of mental faculties, refined taste or judgments, High intellectuals, and aesthetic development of a group....characterized by a special level of material achievement. Culture is a way of life which a people have fashioned for themselves. It includes their art, their science and all their social transition including their system of beliefs and rituals.

Culture should not be seen only in terms of Music, Dance, Drama, and arts. It is the intertwining of the artistic fibers of a nation, with the science and religion of its people, the law and moral expectations of the community, the wisdom of their past and the education of their present and future. Opubor A.E.et al (1979;31). Defines culture as" a vast apparatus, Partly material, Partly human and partly spiritual by which societies are organized into permanent and recognizable groups. Culture is a way of life of a people, their identity and life wire. It has gone beyond idol worshipping since whenever its concept is discussed what readily comes to the mind of an average African is' 'the picture of his fore bears dancing around giant trees in sacrificial worship or otherwise the picture of a Sango man casting spells and mouthing incantations in the process of some unholy ritual.'"(Ibanga, 1993;3).Culture is the language of the people, their life style and existence. Therefore no culture should be termed inferior or superior since is posited by Ibanga [1993;3]it is "the totality of knowledge and behavior, ideas and objects that constitute the common heritage of a people' 'culture is not primitiveness or barbarism. Right from the colonial era up to this present age the white man has succeeded in stuffing the minds of African with western values and interiority complex and this has made them to regard their culture as barbaric and as a people.' 'Without a recognizable



past, a turban present and a bleak future....without perception, ability hope or intellect'' [Enahoro, 2009; 4].

Nigeria possess a culture which reflects the people's way of life just as any other culture.it includes the process of birth, of growing up, of carving riches for oneself, of passing through and fulfilling obligations in the different phases of existence and of pursuing attitudes and attributes that will make one an acceptable member of the society or put one at war with his neighbors depending on the interaction factors. Culture of an individual is dependent on the culture of the society, and or the society to which that individual belongs. What this assertion means according to Elliot cited in Enahoro [2009; 19] is that

The cultural ethics theory is based in society and the culture of a nation as opposed to nature...an individual is shaped by his or her culture...and finds that being parts of the culture club provides an ethical security

Culture influences individuals in the society, it directs their pattern of thinking and behaviors to what it wants them to do. Culture is not limited to music, dance, the law and the morals expectations of the community, the wisdom of their past and the education of the present and the future.

Film as a Medium of Communication

Film as we know today, came into existence on 28th December, 1895 at the grand café on the boulevard de opera in Paris, France when the Lumier brothers Augusta and Louis exhibited their "workers leaving the factory' this was the first time a motion picture would be exhibited a viewing audience; this remarkable event opened the gates for the flow of motion pictures. In Nigeria however, film premiere took place on the 4th of August, 1903 at the Glover hall Lagos. This film featured the Alake of Abeokuta, and was shot during a visit the Alake made to England. Though actual film production started in 1948 with the establishment of the colonial film unit, the main reason behind the establishment of this film unit is to further the aims of colonialism at.

The film therefore was meant to counter the nationalist agitation by showing the people that the British were indeed fulfilling their civilization mission. The film unit was therefore pre-occupied with showing the real achievement of colonialism through highlighting community development, road, and construction agricultural production, visits of colonial



governors and administration of justice. To portray the excellent work done in the heathen parts under the Union Jack.

However, with the attainment of independence it was obvious that the nature of the industry in content, aims and objectives had to rely on various communication means, including film to reach the people. More so, the country now had other alternative sources of films other than the colonial film units or the British council.

The content of the early film were largely documentary in nature, and related to topics such as education, health, agriculture amongst others. The Nigerian natives were shown films by means of travelling cinema vans. It became necessary to use mobile vans because films were few and theatres did not exist in the remote areas. However, due to the continued shortage of vehicles, a majority of Nigerians did not have the opportunity to see films shown by the units. The colonial film unit was not concerned with producing films for African audiences but involved itself in training Africans on the technique of film production. Although the movie *living in bondage* by Ken Nnebue in 1992 set the pace for the emergence of Nollywood, according to Megbejume [1989] "Hollywood is a vehicles through which Nigerian cultural heritage is represented"

Film is not meant for the mere titillation of the senses, rather it performs functional role of affecting man's attitude and increasing his horizon of the world Timothy S.J. (2002;3) is of the opinion the that;

The motion picture has been described as an altruistic cultural documentation process a school of thought contends that what most people know about other countries and places invariables learnt via films. It is also said that a picture is worth more than a thousand words. this is supported by Ossa Edwards and mercy Sokomsa (2006;150).who believes that films functions in an entirely different way...watching a good movie, the individual emerges from it the way one would emerge from reading a good novel; sober, humbled and changed, like the hero would have been.

The film medium appears to have the most universal appeal and impact when compared to other media. When properly harnessed, the film can rise above limitation of language and language barriers by utilizing its creative powers of visuals and audio effects to create a community among an audience of various backgrounds. Film is the most powerful media for fostering cultural awareness. Films tell stories of past event, present event and future event. Enahoro cited in Timothy, S.J (2002) of the view that;



The significance of film as a medium of communication has been very well articulated by David Sills, cited in Timothy, S.J(2002;69);

What affect this artistic, social, and economic phenomenon has on the cultural values of both creators and viewers is an international problem of the magnitude since cinema is a world-wide language that can be grasped by illiterate as well as by the educated. Nothing less than the control of man's mind and emotions is at stake.

What makes film the major cultural force is a combination of different factors which includes uniqueness of film as an art form solemnly dependent on modern technologies, the use of film as a communication medium principally to entertain, instruct, subjugate, persuade and propagate and of course the overall social, political, economic and educational needs of the contemporary world that are deeply dependent on communication in its various forms, films inclusive.

The Role of Film in Preserving Culture

Films perform a functional role main objective being to affect man's emotions. Film as an art form or an instrument for persuasion instruction and entertainment is like a bullet, with force to conquer or at least live a mark for the record. It is a documentary of the consciousness of culture. Galvanizing or fusing all forces into a concrete charger that reconstruct the mind of the people. Film is a custodian of the people's primordial consciousness. Therefore film exposes, liberates exposes, unites, reproaches, reprimands, scorns and can applaud and attract attention, either for positive or for negative reaction. This makes it stand out as unique from other form of mass media. Our culture is fast eroding into oblivion. There is an urgent need to uphold these cultures visually through films to avoid extinction by civilization. Though radio and television may be used for the same purpose, film has an edge over the rest because it has the ability to enter into direct communication with the people and reach the nook and cranny of the country.

Film have an inexplicable bond between itself and the audience as the audience willingly suspends disbelief when viewing a film. It also employs the concept of 'verisimilitude' or realism in the narratives. This captures the audience mind and value in totality. A.E. Opubor and Nwuneli [1992;29] also said "in fact Etokodo soon became a den of robbers, street fighters and rascals" this development came to pass due to the influence of film on audience. The power of film on its audience makes it a viable tool for preserving culture.



Nigerian film makers can reposition Nigerian's dented image by making films that will propagate Nigerian image. A.E. Opubor and Nwuneli corroborates this by saying " Cal penny's kongi's harvest created a great impact in the mind of great black Americans. In the review of the film at its premiere show in Washington, D.C the Washington post of June 16,1972 wrote for many among the black members of the audience, last night was an introduction to the American scene as viewed by Africans themselves.....their own dressing rivaling the spectacle of clothing in the film-predicted success for black film making" Nigerian film makers must as a matter of fact succeed in using the film medium to develop our cultures for the sake of arts, posterity and promotion of our heritage.

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDY SAMPLE

Demographic Data

The questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. It was designed into parts. The first classification involved the bio data information of the respondents, in which five characteristics ranging from educational qualification to marital status were identified. And secondly the classification based on three research questions and in which five variables were examined by the respondent. After the distribution of the questionnaire to a hundred and ten respondents which cut across different areas in Jos, the Plateau State Capital (The study area), a total of one hundred copies was retrieved. The responses are represented in the tables that follow:

Research Question

The following research question was adopted for this study:

- Are films important instruments used in the presentation of a people's culture?
- Can Nigerian film industry portray a rich heritage of the Nigerian culture?
- If manage effectively, can the Nigerian film industry go a great length in propagating the culture of the Nigerian People?

Table 1: Sex

R	F	P
Male	29	29
Female	71	71
Total	100	100

In the above table, the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents' sex is outlined. Of the one hundred respondents, twenty more representing twenty nine percent



were males. While the remaining seventy one representing seventy one percent were females.

Table 2: Educational Qualification

R	F	P
Ph.D	0	0
MA/M.Sc.	0	0
B.Sc./B.A	3	3
Undergraduate	87	87
Others	10	10
	100	100

In the above table, the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents educational qualifications is outlined out of one hundred respondents, zero representing zero percent had Ph.D, zero representing zero percent had MA/M.Sc., three accounting for three percent were holders of B.Sc./B.A, eighty seven persons account for eighty seven percent were undergraduates. Those with other qualifications not specified in the questionnaire were ten accounting for 10 percent.

Table 3: Occupational Qualification

R	F	P
Civil Servant	0	0
Self Employed	7	7
Private Sector Workers	0	0
Student	87	87
Others	3	3
Total	100	100

In the table above, the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents' occupational qualification is outlined. Out of the hundred respondents zero representing zero percent were civil servants, seven representing seven percent were self-employed, zero representing zero percent were private sector workers while eighty seven and three representing eighty seven and three percent were students and others respectively.

**Table 4: Age Grade**

R	F	P
18-29	87	87
30-44	13	13
45 and above	0	0
Total	100	100

The table above shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents' age grade of the one hundred respondents; eighty seven representing eighty seven percent were between the ages of eighteen and twenty nine. Thirteen representing thirteen percent were between the ages of thirty and forty-four. While zero accounting for zero percent were between the ages of forty and above. This suggests that Nigeria's population is largely made up of youths.

Table 5: Marital Status

R	F	P
Married	8	8
Single	92	92
Total	100	100

The table shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondent marital status. Eight representing eight percent were married while the remaining ninety two accounting for ninety two percent were single.

SECTION B

Table 6: Research Question one: Are films important instruments in the preservation of a people's culture?

S/N	Item	SA	A	UD	SD	D	X	Decision
6	Films usually depict the values , attitudes and behaviours of a particular set(s) of people	60	10	5	7	25	3.94	A
7	The western culture is a strong force to reckon with in the world mainly due to the force of the film medium	49	5	20	10	16	3.16	A
8	When properly planned and	80	10	8	2	0	4.68	A



	researched films could be a powerful instrument for the promotion and preservation of people's culture.							
9	The perception of the Indian costumes, language, songs as spectacular is mainly due to their projection by Bollywood films	10	40	35	13	2	3.43	A
10	Films are strong public relations strategies which can communicate and create an understanding of people's culture to the world	85	10	5	0	0	4.8	A

The table above shows the mean score on the information obtained on the power of the film medium. Five terms sort the respondent's assessment in which all variables were accepted. The weighty decision in item six, seven, nine and ten which translates into three point ninety-four, four point sixty eight, three point sixty one, three point forty-three and four point eight respectively affirms that film is an effective tool in preserving culture.

Table 7: Research Question two: Can the Nigeria film industry portray a rich heritage of the Nigerian Culture?

S/N	Item	SA	A	UD	SD	D	X	Decision
11	The depiction of the Nigerian culture and the promotion of westernization is highly promoted in our home videos	10	1 5	20	25	3 0	2. 5	R
12	Nollywood themes and plots usually not connected to the Nigerian people and their lifestyle	57	2 6	7	0	1 0	4. 2	A
13	Nollywood have so far, painted a gory image of Nigerians and disregard their beautiful and rich heritage	42	2 8	10	13	1 7	3. 75	A
14	Nigerians have not root and identity in the world which can be blamed on	0	0	0	82	1 8	1. 82	R



	the poor representation by its film industry.							
15	Nollywood films promote the various Nigerian costumes.	31	2 5	15	0	2 9	3. 27	A

The table above shows the mean score on the information obtained on the effectiveness of Nigeria Film Industry in promoting the rich heritage of the Nigerian culture. Five items sort the respondents assessment in which three variables were translated into four point two, three point seventy five, and three point twenty nine affirms that Nigerian Film Industry have succeeded in promoting the rich heritage of Nigeria culture. However, items eleven and fourteen were rejected by the respondents implying that contrary to what people think the Nigerian Film Industry has failed in its duty to preserve the Nigerian culture.

Table 8: Research question three: if managed properly, can the Nigerian Film Industry go a great length in propagating the culture of the Nigerian people?

S/N	Item	SA	A	UD	SD	D	X	Decision
16	Nigeria is rich in cultural values which is meant to be displayed to the world	70	30	0	0	0	4.7	A
17	Our culture and values are constantly being eroded, thus a means must be created to preserve it	97	3	0	0	0	4.97	A
18	Nigerian Film Industry is an industry highly reckoned with in the world	45	19	10	23	3	3.8	A
19	The film industry could become a leading force in the promotion of our disrupted culture	11	59	30	0	0	3.81	A
20	Nigerians have deep regard for Nollywood stars, thus if they could sell and promote the culture within films they feature in Nigerians could bring up and love their culture.	82	3	10	0	0	4.42	A



The table above shows the mean score on the information obtained on the power of Nigerian Film Industry in propagating the culture of the Nigerian people. Five items sort the respondent's assessment in which all variables were accepted. The decision in all items sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen and twenty which translates into four point seven, four point ninety-seven, three point eight, three point eighty one and four point forty two respectively shows that Nigerian Film Industry if managed well can propagate the heritage of the Nigerian people.

From the findings above, it is evident that the Nigerian Film Industry has not succeeded in utilizing the powerful medium of film in preserving the culture of the people and preventing it from decay. It is possible that the late entry of the Nigerian people into film making is responsible for this development. However, it is not too late. Nigeria has rich ethnic cultures which can be exploited and promoted through the film medium. There are a number of tourist attractions, cultures, etc that can be turned into film, Nigeria has a promising future in this regard, if only our film industry develops. And until that is done Nigerians might not have a place culturally in the world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the potential of film as a medium for preserving culture, this study after a thorough look makes the following recommendations.

1. Nigerian film producers must use the film medium to promote our culture for easier identification in the committee of nations.
2. Nigerian film makers must be culturally faithful to our society. No matter the type of film we produce, they should be able to evoke and relate as close as possible certain social, cultural, feeling to the target audience.
3. Government must as a matter of responsibility set up structures for the training of film makers professionally for the promotion, growth and sustenance of the film industry. This is necessary since film remain the vilest medium for the preservation of cultures.
4. Government must collaborate with private sector to encourage indigenous film making especially in projects that seek to promote our culture and heritage. This will in turn make room for the mass production of film that will properly showcase our culture to the outside world.
5. Government in collaboration in with private sector promote the culture of film viewing via the resuscitation of cinema houses amongst Nigerian since it has great influence on the citizens.



CONCLUSION

The greatest resource of any country is its people. And these people are backed up by values, tradition and culture which they believe in. No country irrespective of its size, population, resource or visible physical development, can call itself great or developed unless it takes care of its people. These people should be allowed to make decision based on their own socio cultural and political environment for the betterment of the living condition of both the individual and the group. Benjamin (2007;70) says that the communication sector has faced a number of problems and constraints in terms of lack of communication facilities, relevant quality technology assessment, finance and man power which has slowed its progress. Therefore from the study one can conclude that there will be no cultural development in the society without a sound and liable means of presenting, educating and promoting the cultures in the society.

Since the exhibiting of "workers leaving the factory" by the Lumiere brothers in Paris on December 28, 1895, many countries have since tapped on the potentials of film to sell and propagate their culture, Nigeria cannot be an exception. We have to realize and appreciate the power and virility of the film industry and maximize it to the fullest as far as our culture is concern. This improvement should translate into concrete steps by the establishment of a conducive film production environment and the building of Cinema Theatre. This action can upgrade the popularity of film and the promotion of culture through it as a respected mass media in Nigeria.

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