

Nollywood, New Communication Technologies and Indigenous Cultures in a Globalized World: The Nigerian Dilemma

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an exploratory study of the Nigerian film industry popularly called Nollywood. It evaluates the humble beginnings of the industry to its meteoric rise which is attributed to audience responses to the films and facilitated by the adoption of new communication technologies. The paper goes on to evaluate the relationship and potential influence of Nollywood on Nigerian indigenous culture in the era of globalization and observes that the influence is both positive and negative. The paper suggests that in the globalized world of today, Nollywood should serve as a vehicle for local cultural transfer as well as a means of indigenous cultural development. This, the paper concludes, should be done through the creative portrayal and juxtaposition of both local and global cultural norms in the themes of Nollywood films.

KEY WORDS: Indigenous Culture, New Communication Technologies, Cultural Transfer, Cultural Development, Globalization, Nollywood.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is an explorative study of the Nigerian film industry popularly referred to as Nollywood. It is one of the fastest growing sectors of the Nigerian economy and reputed to be the third largest film industry in the world (Ekeanyanwu, 2008; Esan, 2008; Uba, 2007; Okoroji, 2006; Onishi, 2002). The largest is United States' Hollywood and the second is India's Bollywood. Nollywood achieved this feat in less than 20 years of its existence by virtue of the volume of production and release of films which was highly influenced by audience approval and patronage, cheap production facilities and resources available to a typical movie producer in the Nigerian environment, shorter time frame required to shoot and produce a movie and the application of ICT amongst other factors. The industry is also progressively making in-roads into the global market. Nollywood productions are now regular features on Multichoice subscribed stations, BEN TV, HiTV, Sky Channels etc. According to Esan (2008:8), "Since January 2008, Nollywood has a dedicated channel offering 24-hour movies service on Sky digital platform to audiences in the UK and Ireland. There are also a range of websites which support the circulation of Nollywood movies".

This paper therefore chronicles the humble beginnings of Nollywood to its meteoric rise within the few years it has been in existence. Part of the reason put forward to justify the phenomenal rise of Nollywood is associated with new communication technologies. This is highlighted in this paper. Furthermore, the global ratings of Nollywood cannot be discussed in isolation of globalization. Globalization in this regard could be seen through the eyes of McLuhan's (1964) slippery concept of 'global village'. The concept of a global village sees the entire globe as a community where natural barriers to global cooperation and

interdependency relationships that existed before now are wiped out or reduced by the advances in new communication technologies. With this understanding, one begins to appreciate why Nollywood have audiences beyond Nigeria and Africa.

The fourth part of this paper evaluates the impact of Nollywood on Nigerian indigenous culture and the impact of Nigerian indigenous culture on Nollywood. This section of the paper, therefore, merits discussion. This is because the film industry is part of the culture industry. Another major reason is that culture defines a people and Nollywood is a means of cultural dissemination. The paper, therefore, attempts to evaluate the type of cultural values Nigerian film industry portrays. To achieve this objective, some vital questions are asked: Are Nollywood films bastardizing Nigerian indigenous cultural values or are they promoting them? Do the themes of Nollywood films portray Nigerian indigenous cultural values truthfully? What role could Nollywood possibly play in curtailing cultural imperialism and promoting indigenous cultural values?

These questions have remained topical and controversial. The issues they raise have also remained unresolved suggesting a society and an industry in a dilemma. However, this paper intends to streamline the arguments and suggest an emerging scenario that considers cultural development as a possible result of a globalized Nollywood. This is the emerging paradigm shift in media and cultural studies which this paper explores.

One may ask, how is this situation a paradigm shift? A school of thought led by scholars such as Hamelink (1996), Schiller (1992), Huntington (1996), and Bienefeld (2005), have often argued that globalization and ICT are gradually eroding local cultural values and replacing them with alien values. They consider globalization as subtle Americanization or to put it more mildly, westernization. This school of thought has emerged as the dominant paradigm whenever issues of cultural influence are juxtaposed with globalization and ICT applications. The emerging paradigm as captured by the thinking of scholars like Reich (1992), Meyer (1997), Zwizwai (1999) and Ekeanyanwu (2008) consider globalization and ICT as forces propelling the world into the emergence of a global-culture that has the capacity to bind society and individuals together in a community of nations. Ekeanyanwu (2008) particularly considers a globalized Nollywood as having the capacity to enrich the Nigerian indigenous culture through the creative portrayal and juxtaposition of both local and global cultural norms in the themes of Nollywood films.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF NOLLYWOOD

The last 15 years could be regarded as the turning point in the history of the Nigerian film industry. This era marked the phenomenal rise of the industry as a major player in the Nigerian economy and a major stakeholder in the Nigerian culture industry. Before this era, Nollywood did not really exist. The dramas aired by the government owned television stations then were discriminated against by advertisers and other stakeholders who refused to sponsor such programmes (Odukamaiya, 1996). So, the industry lacked support from the array of stakeholders who have heavily invested in the sector today.

However, the pioneering role of late Hubert Ogunde is of a very historical relevance here. His epic movie *Aiye* remains a classic that shook the theatres in the late 1970s. He also began the transformation of the Yoruba travelling theatre into the building blocks of what we today call Nigerian film industry or Nollywood. Chief Ogunde's *Aiye* held Nigerians spell-bound at the National Theatre Lagos where the movie premiered. Okoroji (2006) notes that the movie was shown at the National Theatre, Lagos because none of the other theatres at that time could contain the audience who thronged to see the movie. This, however, does not suggest a highly successful movie in terms of quality of production. Maybe, the movie served as an escape route for most movie audiences at that time. Okoroji (2006) even argued that most non Yoruba speakers including himself also thronged to the National Theatre, Lagos to watch the movie. This is very instructive of the situation then. Other pioneers in the industry like Jab Adu, who won many awards with his *Bisi Daughter of the River*; late Adeyemi Afolayan popularly referred to as Ade Love; Moses Olaiya and Ola Balogun were all involved in the Yoruba language movies. They also made unique contributions to the early beginning of a movie industry which metamorphosed into what we now call Nollywood.

The emergence of television in Nigeria in 1959 also contributed immensely to the early beginnings of the Nigerian film industry. With the emergence of television came the need to fill up the air time with some home-grown drama series as against the monotonous cowboy films from the West. One of the first successes in this area is Segun Olusola's *Village Headmaster* later christened *New Village Headmaster*. The success of this series inspired others such as James Iruoha's *Masquerade* also later re-titled *New Masquerade* in its twilight days, Peter Igho's *Cockcrow at Dawn*, Jab Adu's *Adio Family*, Lola Fani Kayode's *Mirror in the Sun*, Matt Dadzie's *Behind the Clouds*, Zeb Ejiro's *Ripples*, Amaka Igwe's *Checkmate*, and late Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Bassej and Company*. This writer remembers how the 8pm of the weekdays and weekends these series were shown on Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) became very special days for him and most other Nigerian families who could not afford satellite dish and decoders needed to watch cable television. Then, the Nigerian Electric Power Authority (NEPA) never disrupted power supply without first notifying its consumers and so electricity supply was guaranteed.

The phenomenal success of *Living in Bondage* produced by Kenneth Nnebue in the 90s contributed immensely to the emergence of Nollywood as a movie industry. According to Okoroji (2006:1):

The true birth of the Nigerian motion picture industry which today is referred to as Nollywood is traceable to the overwhelming success of what may have been considered an experimental project by an enterprising Nigerian businessman called Kenneth Nnebue. Kenneth Nnebue's Igbo language movie - *Living in Bondage* which was marketed on VHS sold like hot akara. In *Living in Bondage*, the universal contradictions of love, wealth, greed and crime were captured in a story that everyone could relate to. After *Living in Bondage*, Kenneth Nnebue made other movies like *Glamour Girls* and proved that an industry could be built around the sales of home videos using the VHS format. Following the success of *Living in Bondage*, most of the serious TV drama producers in Nigeria quickly followed the footsteps of Mr. Nnebue to make feature films marketed on the VHS format and a new industry was born. Some might say that *Living in Bondage* succeeded because the VCR had become widely available domestic equipment in Nigeria. Others might say that *Living in Bondage* may, more than anything else, have led to the explosion of the sales of VCRs in Nigeria because everyone needed the equipment to watch *Living in Bondage*.

Okoroji's (2006) assumptions above should not in any way suggest that the success of *Living in Bondage* as a single movie marked the true birth of Nollywood. *Living in Bondage* is not the first home video to be produced in Nigeria and certainly not the first one to be a commercial success. The controversy over the first home video produced in Nigeria is still a historical dilemma and this writer does not intend to dabble into it. The citing of Okoroji's (2006) assessment of the beginning of Nollywood is instructive here considering the fact that *Living in Bondage* was more or less used to launch movie production in VHS format. The contribution of the VHS format to the growth of the Nigerian movie industry remains a historical fact.

The cinema culture in Nigeria which had retrogressed into a dangerous situation also contributed immensely to the rise of Nollywood. The cinema halls at this time had become havens for marijuana smoking hoodlums and societal miscreants. So, reasonable people avoided such places. No one wanted to be molested or assaulted by these hoodlums who had taken over these cinema houses. Their activities gave cinema a negative image and reputation. This is partly the reason most of them crashed. Second is lack of patronage from families who avoided such places and regarded those found around cinema houses as riff raffs and societal misfits. The only consolation became the grossly inadequate drama series aired on Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) channels. These drama series were regarded as grossly inadequate

because they were not enough to fill in the air time and even the few that were aired, the quality of production was questionable or debatable (Odukomaiya, 1996). However, these drama series only whetted the appetite of the viewing public for made in Nigeria films. This opportunity slowly helped to nurture the growth of the Nigerian film industry.

The early Nollywood movies presented a stereotyped and fixated view of the Nigerian cultural environment. The movies portrayed the Nigerian society as a voodoo-based society. It presented blood sucking ritual activities, witchcraft, secret cults and mysticism as common practices in the Nigerian society. To worsen the situation, most of these films with the above mentioned themes became instant commercial successes. This made the Nollywood self-styled moguls instant successes too. These moguls were largely semi literate, small-time and unprofessional businessmen who stumbled on film making by chance. Uba (2007:11) notes that these businessmen willingly staked their capital and other investments into a non-existent film sector then. According to him:

Without any formal filmmaking knowledge or professional advice or assistance from the government or the so called organized-private-sector (OPS), these unschooled merchants created Nollywood and in twenty years they made Nollywood the third largest film market in the world as well as the most innovative. They broke all the rules and threw the books away. They broke the formats of filmmaking and they broke the dictatorship of time. They would start shooting a film on Monday and by Saturday the films would be selling in markets around the country and the continent. For lesser deeds, lesser mortals have had their legends enshrined in the Guinness book of record, but not these men. However they are not interested in our awards or recognition or Oscars: The money was rolling in, and that was all the compensation they craved for their valiant effort. Yet the world continues to marvel and wonder how they achieved all that we see today? (Uba, 2007:11)

These pioneers grew so wealthy in the emerging film industry and became fixated with pseudo believe in the formula that has brought them success. This made things very difficult for the professional film maker with no capital of his own and no access to the banks, to control the creative process in film making (Uba, 2007). Uba (2007) goes on to note that the professional film makers were forced to dance to the tune of these businessmen who have bonded themselves into a cabal under the aegis of Nigerian Film Marketers Association. Any professional director, actor, actress, producer, or scriptwriter who fails to do their bidding was variously dealt with. Several leading Nollywood actors and actresses were victims of this recently when they were banned from featuring in any film for a whole year.

The government was not also left out in this creative destruction. The government for so long deferred its film regulatory policies to the bidding of these pioneer Nollywood merchants. The National Film and

Video Censors' Board (NFVCB) only came on board through Decree NO. 85 of 1993 and became fully operational in December 1994. To date, the Board has not been able to tackle some of the major challenges that have to do with regulation, quality assurance and standards. The movie marketers under the aegis of Nigerian Film Marketers Association still control the industry to suit their capitalist tendencies.

Another unique aspect of Nollywood's history is uniquely captured by Esan (2008:4) thus:

It can be argued that in more ways than is readily evident, the economic and political instability experienced in Nigeria since the 80s contributed to the development of Nollywood. The austerity measures and the perils of night life in the 80s was a sharp contrast from the 70s when life was easier; then there was a bubbling night life and cinema attendance was usual. The prevalent need for caution and security consciousness meant changes in lifestyles that led to the preference for home based entertainment. This was when 24 hour TV transmission began in Nigeria first as a weekend service on Lagos Television. As stations had a demand for local productions to put on the airwaves independent production became viable. Dwindling public funds had led to cutbacks in the funding of the arts and government owned television stations. In this context independent production thrived though television production as a whole was quite challenging at that time. Independent producers were forging through uncharted paths as television funding had been secure under the public service stations till then. For survival they needed direct access to audiences, hence their foray into production of home movies. It is indeed ironic that the same instability which contributed to the decline in cinema attendance contributed to the growth of the Nigerian movie industry.

Esan (2008) further notes that the early Nollywood movies did not use fully developed scripts and that performers were not always fully briefed on creative issues and ideas for security reasons. He notes that much of the dialogue especially in the Yoruba language productions was ad-libbed. Performers therefore, had to be familiar with the culture to do this successfully. This early situation of Nollywood (which has changed to some extent) was thus characterized by predictable storylines, slow paced rendition of lines, questionable sequels, lengthy, confusing and noisy dialogues.

These, however, did not affect the economic growth of the industry. A special report on the *Guardian* of March 2006 indicates that the Nigerian film industry "in just 13 years, has gone from nothing to an estimated earnings of US\$200million (£114m) a year." Industry watchers and analysts are already projecting estimated revenue of £100 billion by 2020. Going by Nigeria's current population estimates of 147million (140million in Nigeria by 2006 Nigerian census figures; 7million across other nations of the world by World Bank estimates), this projected revenue target is sure realizable.

NOLLYWOOD AND NEW COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

Two major reasons, amongst other ones, have been adduced for the phenomenal growth of the Nigerian film industry. One of such reasons is the serious thirst of Nigerians for entertainment rooted in their own cultural environment (Odukomaiya, 1996; Esan, 2008; Ekeanyanwu, 2008). This made the Nigerian Nollywood audience patronize anything that came from the industry. The other reason which we intend to highlight in this section of the paper is the development and diffusion of new communication technologies. The argument in support of new communication technologies stems from the fact that the VCR technology, for instance, provided the platform for a relatively cheap and uncomplicated process leading to mass production of Nollywood movies. By conventional wisdom therefore, high volume of trade or a high rate of turnover is evidence of audience approval of the products and evidence of success and growth in any industry.

The developments, advances, and sophistication that have characterized the communication industry in the last three decades could be summarized as new communication technologies. New communication technology is therefore evidence of new media developments. Information Technology, which is the encompassing term that includes new communication technologies, is the study and use of electronic facilities and computers to collect, store, analyze, and distribute information and other forms of communication messages across frontiers and borders. According to Dizzard (1997:11) in his *“Old Media, New Media”*, ICT or new communication technologies are the electronic equipment which are increasingly interactive in nature, allowing consumers to choose what information and entertainment resources they want, when they want it, and in what form they want it.

However, new communication technology is not something you define, it is better described. Adaja (2007:127) citing Joseph (2003:22) and Popoola (2003:51) note that new communication technology embraces communication hardware and software like computer and their programme, earth orbiting satellites and satellite dishes, audio and video cable networks, web cameras and web TVs, modems and scanners; fixed wireless, and mobile telephone cum videophone system fax, and telex, telemeter and teleprompter, video text and teleconferencing, the world wide web (www) and of course, the Internet. The change from analogue transmission of television signal to satellite and digital transmission is a new communication development. The Internet technology is also a new media technology that exploited the computer technology.

New communication development could also be described from a bigger perspective-Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Soola (1998:86) notes that ICT provides near limitless possibilities of

increasing the quantity, and enhancing the quality, speed and availability of information in a complex but increasingly interdependent world of business. Adaja (2007:126) also notes that ICT “is basically the application of modern technologies to information generation, processing, storage, retrieval and dissemination to meet the needs and requirements of individuals, groups, organizations, governments and societies. It guarantees accuracy, efficiency, prompt and instantaneous transmission or distribution of information.”

References to the “Information Revolution” reflect the rapid advance in the power and speed of computers, the digitalization of information, and the convergence of once-separate industries into a new amalgam of production, distribution, and consumption activities. Made possible by the shift from analog to digital technologies (a shift towards messages encoded in a series of ‘0’s and ‘1’s), convergence merges computers, telecommunications, television, and the Internet into a single multimedia environment. These are typically accompanied by important organizational and commercial changes as well. Information Technology and the IT Revolution refer not only to traditional communications functions, but also to the steady introduction of computer technology (such as chips) into nearly every sector and activity, from health to transport to education (Wilson 111, 1998).

A recent text on globalization and IT suggests that the current “information revolution” will have a “greater and qualitatively different” impact than any previous phenomenon (Kahin and Nesson 1997, preface). However, there are those who think that the “information revolution” is a mere hypodermic exaggeration whose impact does not really matter. Yet, there is little consensus in the literature on Information Technology (IT) and globalization, and their impact on developing states. Even in a highly developed industrialized society like the United States, which is both saturated with new IT and replete with statistical, empirical, and anecdotal evidence, there is, surprisingly, little consensus among experts on the impact of IT. For example, despite years of research and mounds of evidence, there is no single consensus on what effect viewing television violence has on aggressive behaviour in American children (Lowery and DeFleur, 1995:340).

Rothkop (1997:98) in his remarks to justify the place of new communication technologies in today’s world states that:

Much has been written about the role of information technologies and services in this process. Today, 15 major U.S. telecommunications companies, including giants like Motorola, Loral Space & Communications, and Teledesic (a joint project of Microsoft’s Bill Gates and cellular pioneer Craig McCaw), offer competing plans that will encircle the globe with a constellation of satellites and will enable anyone anywhere to communicate instantly with anyone elsewhere without an established telecommunications infrastructure

on the ground near either the sender or the recipient. Technology no doubt, is not only transforming the world; it is creating its own metaphors as well. Satellites carrying television signals now enable people on opposite sides of the globe to be exposed regularly to a wide range of cultural stimuli. Russian viewers are hooked on Latin soap operas, and Middle Eastern leaders have cited CNN as a prime source for even local news.

The Nollywood success story may never have occurred without the development and diffusion of new communication technologies. This statement supports the views of Esan (2008) who notes that the progress made in the industry would never have occurred without the flexibility of the new communication technology. The lower costs of video production kits democratized the chances of participation in the industry and more professionals, without the burden of large mainstream corporations, are able to translate their creative ideas into the appropriate format for dissemination in the market. Such an army of talent was available especially with the deregulation of the television industry. The pioneering government stations had rationalized their staff and many trained personnel had been made redundant. These, along with the amateur theatre practitioners, and graduates of the new theatre arts, and mass communication departments from higher institutions had formed a nucleus of the independent production force that served the industry. Without the democratized access facilitated by the video technology, many of these could have remained on the unemployment queues and their talent undiscovered (Esan, 2008).

To justify his earlier position which suggests that Nollywood may not have made it so fast if communication technologies did not play impactful role, Esan (2008:11) further observes thus:

The flexibility of distribution occasioned by the use of VHS and more recently Video CDs (VCD) and Digital Videos (DVD) has contributed in no small measure to the development of the industry. It is on record that the production which marked the actual debut of Nollywood was due to an importer of blank VHS tapes who found that by adding value to the blank tapes, recording and selling copies of popular TV dramas, he had found a more profitable, more efficient way of distributing his stock of tapes. The success of the initial effort was clear evidence that taking 'cinema' into the private (personal or group) spaces was a viable venture.

Okoroji (2006:2) has earlier supported this position as Chairman, Performing and Mechanical Rights Society (PMRS) in his presentation at a National Workshop on Developing an Intellectual Property Strategy in Abuja, Nigeria. According to him, "regardless of which camp any one may belong to, it is not debatable that while Nollywood came to be as a result of the serious thirst of Nigerians for entertainment rooted in their own culture and environment, the VCR technology provided the platform for its take off." He concludes that VCR provided Nollywood a platform for a relatively cheap and uncomplicated process for the

producers of Nigerian movies to mass produce VHS copies for sale. This aided the increase in the rate of turnover of Nollywood products.

New communication technology also affected the Nigerian film industry negatively. In this line, Okoroji (2006:2) argues thus:

Regardless of which camp any one may belong to, it is not debatable that while Nollywood came to be as a result of the serious thirst of Nigerians for entertainment rooted in their own culture and environment, the VCR technology provided the platform for its take off. Is it therefore not an irony that the VCR which provided a cheap platform for Nollywood to take off also became its albatross? While it was relatively cheap and uncomplicated for the producers of Nigerian movies to mass produce VHS copies for sale, it also soon became clear that many unauthorized people were using the same cheap technology to mass produce the same movies and to sell them at extremely cheap prices. There are many in the industry who will swear that for every legitimate copy of a movie sold in Nigeria, five illegitimate copies have been sold.

Okoroji (2006) also notes that one of the attack lines in trying to discourage people from patronizing pirated works was to tell them that pirated products are inferior. This line of argument can no longer hold because as “the products move rapidly from analogue based technologies to digital formats, there is really no longer any difference between the original and the copy. Indeed with respect to the packaging of the products, the pirated copies, a lot of which are made in the Far East look better than the originals made at home.” But the stakeholders in the industry can have an emotional appeal to the movie audience to stop buying pirated copies. Movie regulators should also step up their campaign against these unwholesome practices in the industry. Stiffer penalties should be imposed on violators of this law and the trial and sentencing of such violators or offenders should be published to the public for them to know that such offences are punishable by law. This will go a long way in making the Nigerian movie audience more tolerant to the plight of stakeholders in the industry. It will also reduce the number of persons involved in this act.

NOLLYWOOD AND GLOBALIZATION

It will be a dramatic omission to discuss the future of Nollywood in isolation of globalization. This is because globalization captures vividly McLuhan's (1964) concept of global village which has become a reality today due to the advances in new communication technologies. With the global village idea fully in place, Nollywood's market potentials and area of influence also increased. This means that Nollywood is not for Nigeria and Nigerians alone anymore. Most African societies also depend on the industry for their

entertainment needs. Europe and North America have also begun to take interest in the Nigerian movie industry especially with regard to how fast movies are produced, audience support for the industry and financial returns on investment. Secondly, with over seven million Nigerians in Diaspora craving for home-made (Nigerian) entertainment and Nollywood as an industry trying hard to meet this need, globalization issues become a primary discourse in this paper.

Globalization is seen as a comprehensive term for the emergence of a global society in which economic, political, environmental, and cultural events in one part of the world quickly come to have significance for people in other parts of the world. Globalization is also seen as the result of advances in communication, transportation, and information technologies. It describes the growing economic, political, technological, and cultural linkages that connect individuals, communities, businesses, and governments around the world (Microsoft Encarta Reference Library, 2005). Broadly speaking, globalization refers to trans-border inter-connectedness in all spheres of the economy, politics, trade, culture, industry, services and communication. It indicates a world in which complex economic, political, social and cultural processes operate and interact without any influence of national boundaries and distance (Joseph, 2006:97). The concept implies that development in any part of the world can have far-reaching consequences in other parts of the world too.

Friedman (2005) states that the 21st century will be remembered for a whole new world of globalization - a flattening of the world. He seeks to reconfigure the whole globalized world as flat in the sense that the entire world is a level playing field with easy enough exits and entrances. This has always been the argument of capitalists, which globalization has come to re-enforce. But is the world truly flat? At a time the argument was that the world was spherical and without end. Twentieth century scholars and researchers suggested otherwise after rigorous studies, explorations and arguments. With the sophistication in the application of ICT, a new school of thought now thinks the world is flat. Whether the world is flat, round or spherical, one true fact is that the entire globe is not a level playing field for all participants.

The globalized world is entering a new phase where more people than ever before are going to have access to ICT facilities as innovators, collaborators, and even as terrorists (Joseph, 2006). Friedman (2005) argues that every where one turns to, hierarchies are being challenged from below or transforming themselves from top down structures into a more horizontal and collaborative entities. This flattening process is happening at unusual speed and directly or indirectly touching a lot more people on planet at

once. Kumar (2005) is also of the view that in the globalized virtual flat land of media, depth has yielded to breadth and we surf television channels across a shallow expanse.

It is interesting at this point to observe that McLuhan (1964) had predicted 43 years ago the emergence of this situation when he visualized a dispersed media structure “whose centres are everywhere and margins are nowhere”. Today, globalization and new communication technologies have led to the emergence not only of a global village but also of a global family and community now sharing common values, economic cum political ideologies and socio-cultural orientations irrespective of their places of geographical provenance, race, language and socio-economic status (Ekeanyanwu, 2008).

Uba (2007) chronicles the potential influence of globalization on Nollywood when he notes that the greatest impetus for the rush for Nollywood productions is shown to the sector by foreign content channels/production firms like MNET, TV Africa, etc. For instance, MNET hosted a sensational competition for the production of two Nigerian TV serials, promising to sponsor the winning submissions to the tune of \$40,000 per episode/per week for the next 65 episodes which translates to N332.8million for roughly 16 months. Previously, Nigerian producers would budget a paltry ten or twenty million naira for the same project. This means that standards will increase, quality of production will gradually become central to success and the market will rapidly move from being local to gradually becoming global.

This will not however be a tragedy for the astute and ambitious local filmmakers as many fear, so long as they are willing to embrace professionalism and make the effort to produce globally competitive films from the Nigerian perspectives (Uba, 2007). The issues raised above as well as environmental and policy related factors are some of the major reasons that have kept Indian and Asian indigenous film producers relevant in their movie industries. Other issues like cultural protectionism that India pursues as a policy also has relevance in the analysis of the success of the Indian film industry and society (Chadha and Kavoori, 2000).

With the help of globalization, Nollywood has also entered into TV syndication business. The syndication market has been enhanced by the demand for programming by terrestrial and satellite Nigerian television stations and those transmitting outside the African continent to Nigerians in the Diaspora. Newer stations have the challenge of sourcing for more affordable and more culturally appropriate content rather than Western (to be precise Hollywood) fare that had dominated the airwaves and Nollywood fills the gap. Though, the growth of Nollywood has not significantly reduced the quantity of

foreign videos on Nigerian television, it has, however, called attention to the potential/possibility of indigenous television programming for atleast 60% of air time in a 24-hour broadcast per day.

This is not yet happening but with the phenomenal rise and success of Nollywood, the future of indigenous programming in Nigerian television industry looks bright. Our concern here is that Nollywood's filling of television programming gaps constitute alternative streams of income for Nollywood producers. It also means that audiences other than the ardent followers could be courted. For example the *Africa Magic* channel on South Africa's satellite television company Multichoice has a fare that is largely devoted to Nigerian movies and this helps to broaden the base of those exposed to Nollywood productions (Esan, 2008).

NOLLYWOOD AND THE NIGERIAN INDIGENOUS CULTURE

The major object of this study is primarily culture. Is Nollywood aided by globalization and new communication technologies bastardizing Nigeria's indigenous culture or is the industry helping the globalization of Nigeria's indigenous cultural values? This primary question is the overriding issue, which this paper addresses in this section. Therefore, there is a need to look much more closely at what constitutes culture.

UNESCO (1994) defines culture as including the whole complex of distinctive, spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or a social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs. Culture is also the totality of human endeavours in a given time and place. People are constructs of their culture. Culture gives people their identity and dignity. It is every day expression and future aspirations. Culture and development are intertwined because culture underpins development and reinforces it. That is why it is often said that a people without a culture are a people without a future or destiny (Ekeanyanwu, 2008).

The World Book Encyclopedia (2005) also says culture consists of all the ideas, objects and ways of doing things created by a group. These include arts, beliefs, customs, innovations, language, technology and tradition. Culture also consists of learned ways of acting, feeling and thinking rather than biologically determined ways. Ukeje (1980) cited in Ekeanyanwu (2005) also defines culture as "a fabric of ideas, beliefs, skills, tools, methods of thinking, eating and talking, customs and institutions into which a member of a society is born."

From these definitions, it could be deduced that the greater part of what makes up culture is acquired or learned, not innate. This implies that culture could be learned, acquired, experienced or transferred from generation to generation through many ways. One of such obvious ways is through the media of communication or communications technology (Ekeanyanwu, 2008).

The Nigerian movie industry evolved on the platform of Nigeria's rich cultural heritage in the arts. The talents from traditional street theatres, traditional story telling cultures and early attempts at indigenous television programming also had enormous contributions to this evolution. In building on the antecedents of indigenous cultural values, Esan (2008:10) states that:

Nollywood evolved around a dominant language structure which also reflects the original geopolitical structure of Nigeria. The industry thus has 3 distinct sectors; Yoruba movies, Igbo movies and Hausa movies. The movies tend to reflect the cultures in these areas and are often produced and distributed from the commercial nerve centres in these regions and Lagos - the nation's commercial capital. This structure has been inherited by the Nigerian Film and Video Censors Board as a basis of classifying the video / films. There are also English language productions and what has evolved as a distinct category - the *Engligbo*, so labelled because of the tendency to use both Igbo and English languages. Engligbo also reflect tensions between modern and traditional Igbo cultures. The ethnic affiliation around the industry is very clear in the story lines, shooting location, and sometimes even in the cast. To this end, it becomes easier for audiences to relate to and identify with Nollywood.

The collateral challenges fostered by Nollywood are as a result of diverse interests, needs and preferences of its heterogeneous audiences. This heterogeneity is rooted in the range of ethnic, linguistic, religious and other socio-political factors within Nigeria and other parts of Africa that constitute the primary market for Nollywood movies (Esan, 2008). It is therefore important to restate here that culture identifies a people and is central to primordial and self-determination sentiments. Nollywood is therefore expected to portray these sentiments in the themes of its movies/films.

To fulfill this objective, three lines of arguments are clearly distinguished. These lines of thought have emerged in the analysis of the impact of Nollywood on Nigerian indigenous culture, and the impact of Nigerian indigenous culture on the Nigerian movie industry. The first line of argument sees Nollywood as bastardizing Nigerian local cultural values, thus, impacting negatively on the Nigerian indigenous culture. The argument here is that the Nigerian indigenous cultural values are not adequately portrayed in themes of Nollywood movies. This is, however, debatable. But the truth of this argument lies in the reasons given to justify their position. The display of witchcraft, ritual killing, crass immorality etc as major and prevailing

themes in Nollywood movies is not representative of the true Nigerian indigenous society. The proponents of the view believe the Nigerian society is much more than the movies portray. This school of thought sees the Nigerian society as very rich in cultural ethos, hospitable, and traditional heritage of respect. The Nigerian society, from the perspective of this school of thought, also has a high moral standards and respect for family values. So, overplaying the minority incidences of voodooism, loose sense of morality, witchcraft antics and ritual killings is not acceptable to this school of thought. To them, this amounts to a poor betrayal of cultural trust.

Another important concern of those who argue that Nollywood has impacted negatively on Nigerian indigenous culture is in the area of language, which they consider a core component of culture. The thinking here is that language should bring movies closer to the grassroots audience. However, the major concern is that indigenous Nigerian languages are rarely used in Nollywood movies. Unfortunately too, some of these movies present the traditional societies long before the advent of colonialism yet English language is the mode of communication. Films made in Nigeria with national and international themes could use local languages and subtitles in any desirable language. Subtitles help to transcend ethnic, cultural and linguistic barriers such local languages could have imposed in the international market for the films.

The second line of argument, which this paper highlights, is that Nollywood industry has impacted positively on Nigerian indigenous culture more than it has impacted negatively. There is also the argument that the Nigerian indigenous cultural values have also impacted on Nollywood productions. This argument stems from the fact that Nollywood is today a success story. The success is linked to audience acceptance of the products of the industry. The view here is that sometimes producers and directors of Nollywood movies overplay some negative themes which debase or deride Nigeria's cultural ethos. But the truth is that some of these so-called negative themes are now common features of our cultural environment. Take for example, witchcraft, ritual killing, sexual immorality etc. Are these issues alien to the Nigerian society anymore? The argument that they were picked up from Nollywood may not be sustained because most of these issues are older than Nollywood itself. However, most of these are as a result of cultural globalization which was earlier mentioned.

The third line of argument is that Nollywood has impacted both negatively and positively on the Nigerian indigenous culture. It is also argued here that the Nigerian indigenous cultural values have rubbed off on the theme of Nollywood movies. Beyond this, proponents of this line of argument, which the present

author subscribes to, submit that Nollywood should be Nigeria's mirror to the world; and the world's mirror of Nigeria. It is also expected that Nollywood should portray global themes if Nigeria hopes to integrate into the global village. This does not also mean a neglect of Nigeria's rich cultural heritage; rather, both local and global themes could be adequately reflected in the themes of the movies. Sometimes, global cultural norms could be given local content interpretation to make them more meaningful for local consumption while other times local cultural values could be portrayed in a way the global audience could appreciate them better.

This is the major reason Esan (2008: 8) states that:

Viewed from a national perspective, there are two key motivations for Nollywood. One is to do with the issue of cultural identity, and the other relates to economic independence. On both counts, Nollywood continues to be seen as contributing to the fight against *cultural imperialism* in tangible ways. In the days following Nigeria's hosting of the Festival of African Arts and Culture in 1977, there was political goodwill and financial support for promoting the arts and cultural heritage in Nigeria. The question of distinctiveness and identity has been firmly placed on the national agenda since that time. Although the goodwill may have been short-lived, the rhetoric did last, and it has continued to influence production in the creative industries.

Nollywood has the potential to project positive indigenous culture and identities and foster mutual understanding of different ethnic groups. If it does this, it demonstrates its capacity to promote national integration. As with its precursors in the media, the cultural expectation is that Nollywood will promote positive behaviour patterns and social development. This expectation finds its roots in the didactic nature of the traditional storytelling. It also explains the emphasis on the morality tales. As it finds support in the international market, the industry now helps to champion the African identity to those in the Diaspora. This is consistent with the nation's foreign policy in which Africa is the centerpiece (Esan, 2008).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is unimaginable to think of Nigeria without Nollywood anymore. Some Nigerians are practically addicted to Nigerian movies and these include Nigerians in the Diaspora. Nollywood is also providing a uniting factor as the different cultures are better understood through some of its movies. *Living in Bondage* which opened the floodgates is an Igbo language movie set in some Igbo environment. Nigerians from Lagos to Maiduguri bought the movie. A lot of the people who stormed the National Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos to watch Ogunde's epic *Aiye* during the premiere did not understand one word of Yoruba (Okoroji, 2006).

However, the last fifteen years have not always been rosy for Nollywood despite recent successes. The erstwhile refusal of the Government to provide support and funding, the unprofessional attitude and conducts of the practitioners coupled with the aversion of the banks to lend the needed financial support, made things very difficult for the early film makers. These, and the lack of a formal, effective indigenous film distribution network and infrastructure, made the whole venture very risky and the cost of production astronomical.

The risky situation as described above is no longer the same today. The Government and the private sector have suddenly woken up to the huge potential of the movie/entertainment industry for boosting tourism with the potential of generating billions of Naira for the country. Besides, the taxes on film products and the massive potential for employment generation has spurred the Ministries of Information, Tourism and Labour as well as other government agencies and parastatals to begin to pay more than lip service to Nollywood in terms of appropriate regulations to tackle piracy and enhance productivity (Uba, 2007).

The discourse so far shows that Nollywood has impacted on Nigerian indigenous culture greatly. However, this impact is both negative and positive. The negative impact could easily be addressed by the industry. This could be done by stopping the current rush to portray Nigeria as a society of ritual killers, morally depraved beings, looters of public treasury who go unpunished, cultists, witches and wizards etc. My argument here is not that these issues do not happen in Nigeria, they do. But to portray them in most of the movies made is not reflective of Nigeria's true cultural heritage and values.

Second, the borrowing of negative themes (with serious cultural implication) from outside of Nigeria, just to impress some section of the public may also be taking its toll on the Nigerian indigenous culture and should therefore be stopped or reduced to the barest minimum. Sexually explicit displays that are prevalent in Nollywood productions today are definitely not part of Nigeria's cultural heritage. It may be regarded as a negative cultural transfer from the West through television and of course, Nollywood. This is where globalization has negatively affected Nollywood and thus, the Nigerian society. This may be the major reason why some proponents of cultural protectionism are calling for stricter regulations through the National Film and Video Censors' Board (NFVCB).

Therefore, if this trend as described above could be reversed, Nollywood would have been seen as portraying Nigeria in her true light. There are lots of rich cultural themes yet to be fully exploited by

Nollywood. Some of these themes include exploiting Nigerian rich cultural values, strong family ties, resourcefulness, ingenuity, love, intellectualism amongst others. Producers, directors and scriptwriters could look inwards and see that evil is not more in Nigeria than it is in Mexico, South Africa, India and other South American societies whose movies speak well of their societies. India, for instance, is well known for occultism but you hardly see such themes portrayed in their movies. Rather, what we often see is themes of love, loyalty, family values and indigenous cultural beliefs.

The larger interest of this paper centred on how to use Nollywood to advance the course of Nigeria's indigenous cultural development. It is true that culture is not static. It is dynamic and therefore we must allow for socio-cultural, economic, political and global impact on our traditional values. However, dynamism of culture should not be misconstrued as abandonment of intrinsic values in our indigenous culture. This consciousness if allowed to influence the content and themes of Nollywood movies, Nigeria will surely be on her way to a cultural revolution. Nigeria has a rich cultural heritage which Nollywood is yet to fully tap. The world as a community (in a global village sense) and Nigerians in Diaspora still do not know the true Nigeria because of negative portrayals in both local and global media industries. Therefore, Nollywood should adopt cultural development as a centerpiece of its movie and documentary productions on or about Nigeria. This will definitely advance the course of indigenous cultural development in Nigeria.

This call may not be easy for Nollywood to heed considering the forces that determine the themes of Nollywood productions. By this, I am talking about movie marketers (as earlier discussed), other professionals in the industry like actors and actresses who may not wish to accept specific scripts/roles in certain movies, and most importantly, the movie audience and market for such productions. Their interests, tastes etc must be taken into consideration at all times. This author, however, notes that any Nollywood project that has Nigerian indigenous cultural development as a primary focus will sell any day and anywhere. Nollywood audiences, from empirical studies, are mostly interested in good movies with rich cultural themes (Odukamaiya, 1996; Esan, 2008; Ekeanyanwu, 2008).

For the cultural development project to work in Nigeria, there should be a creative portrayal and juxtapositioning of Nigerian rich cultural heritage with positive global norms. The themes of such productions should be attractive and acceptable to foreigners and Nigerians alike. Above all, the productions should be done using new communication technologies. Furthermore, best practices in related industries worldwide must be adopted and applied. Major stakeholders in the industry must also play their roles in a spirit of professionalism.

In summary, this author notes that Nollywood must have Nigerian indigenous culture at heart in fulfilling the role of a cultural transfer channel. One sure way of doing this is through language. Language is of special consequence in the analysis of culture because it is a community-based art form that serves as the link to understanding a culture. Without language we cannot truly understand the traditions of a culture because language holds knowledge about the identity of a people. Therefore, once we start to lose our ability with our languages, we begin to lose knowledge - indigenous knowledge that is important for sustainable development - about ourselves (Sado, 2007).

Therefore, Nollywood must take cognizance of this in productions that aim at cultural exchange. Fear should not be entertained on whether such productions will sell in foreign markets. Of course, it will. In the early 1980s, Indian and Chinese films did so well in the Nigerian market. They even outsold their American rivals (Odukamaiya, 1996). The Nigerian cinema houses and home viewing audiences patronized these Indian and Chinese films with passion. But the point this author wishes to bring out here is that most or all of these Indian and Chinese films of the early 80s were produced in their indigenous languages and subtitled in English language, Arabic etc depending on the country of export. So, the language of communication cannot be an obstacle for Nollywood projections into the world market. The industry's concern should be focused on producing high quality, rich cultural, attractive and professionally packaged movies that have the capacity to attract a global audience and thus do well in the global market.

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