

THE RISE OF NOLLYWOOD IN GLOBAL CULTURE: A SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Nollywood, Nigeria's immensely productive film industry has experienced an astonishing surge in popularity and success in recent years. This remarkable rise has firmly established Nollywood as a significant force in global popular culture. The industry's undeniable triumph can be attributed to many cultural and social factors contributing to its exceptional accomplishments and global recognition. These factors include the rich cultural heritage ingrained in Nigerian society, the rapid growth and accessibility of technology, the storytelling abilities and creative brilliance of Nigerian filmmakers, the unwavering support from local audiences, and the increasing demand for diverse narratives that reflect authentic human experiences. With the combination of these elements, Nollywood has ascended to new heights, connecting people across borders and becoming a cultural phenomenon. As the industry continues to evolve, it will expand its impact on global popular culture, solidifying its status as a dominant African cinematic powerhouse. To comprehend the resistance of Nollywood to cultural imperialism, it is essential to understand the concepts of culture and cultural imperialism. Antonio Gramsci's influential work sheds light on the connection between culture, power, and production, highlighting the distinction between intellectual and moral leadership as a form of hegemony. The exponential rise of Nollywood has challenged traditional notions of cultural imperialism, and this study advocates for further research and comprehensive analysis to understand its profound impact and far-reaching implications. This study underscores the need for further research on Nollywood's impact, as it will contribute significantly to the ongoing conversation around the interplay between global cultures, challenging established beliefs about cultural imperialism.

Keywords: Nollywood, Global Culture, Socio-Cultural Perspective.

I. Introduction

Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry, has emerged as a tremendously influential and rapidly expanding entity since its inception in 2002. Although relatively youthful compared to other established film industries, Nollywood has made remarkable strides in the past two decades. Critical advancements in digital technologies, coupled with the accessibility of global markets, have contributed significantly to Nollywood's ascent onto the worldwide stage. As the second largest film industry globally, preceded only by the illustrious Hollywood, Nollywood's impact on the cinematic landscape is undeniable.

Impressively, Nollywood generates awe-inspiring annual revenues of approximately \$600,000,000, solidifying its position as a force to be reckoned with in popular culture. These staggering figures further underline Nollywood's immense potential within the global entertainment industry. Therefore, this paper explores the cultural and social factors that paved the way for Nollywood's meteoric rise in global popular culture. A deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of Nollywood's success can be attained by delving into these critical aspects. (Oguamanam, 2020)

To fully comprehend the burgeoning prominence of Nollywood within global popular culture, it is imperative to delve into various facets of the industry. In recent years, Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry, has experienced tremendous popularity worldwide. The ventures aimed at expanding Nollywood's influence worldwide were fortified with astute cultural strategies targeting Africans and the African diaspora. These strategies sought to instil a resounding sense of pride in African heritage through the prolific African films hailed for their artistic achievements. In light of constructive feedback and a genuine aspiration to captivate a broader international audience, vigorous measures were taken to address the Indigenous film industries' funding and production challenges. However, to effectively project Nigeria's image on the global stage, it was essential to venture beyond the confines of the nation-state, with film emerging as a potent and charismatic conduit for achieving this

paramount objective. (Onikoyi2024; Usua and Ijah, 2023; Ekperuoh, 2021; Pemberton, 2023)

II. Theoretical Framework

In the global popular imagination, Africa, like colonized cultures, exudes a dichotomized (primitive/modern, exotic/familiar, authentic/inauthentic) presence. These dichotomies have profound effects on Africa's representation and self-representation. They are also helpful in illustrating the various debates on cultural globalization. Nollywood, Nigeria's emergent homegrown film industry is an interesting case to understand recent theories and debates on cultural globalization and issues of cultural imperialism, hybridity, and cultural production.

While the question of globalization's effects on culture is incredibly complex and contested, theorists like Anthony Giddens illustrate a helpful starting point. Giddens argues that globalization can be understood as an 'intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa'. This is useful in understanding Nigeria's increased integration into the world economy and the flow of information and images around the globe in recent years due to the discovery and exploitation of oil. This has had varied effects, from increasing the wealth and capital of a small elite to disastrous structural adjustment policies that have wrought havoc on rural areas and the urban poor. In the cultural and media sphere, the dramatic shift from a plethora of state-controlled cultural productions to the liberalization of the media and the recent emergence of Nollywood has meant a necessity to understand the effects of globalization on local culture and cultural production.

To understand issues of cultural imperialism and Nollywood's resistance to it, it is necessary to have a conceptual understanding of culture and cultural imperialism. An early and influential conceptualization of cultures and their change comes from the work of Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci saw culture as linked to power and production and distinguished between 'intellectual and moral leadership' as a form of hegemony and direct control or coercion through the state. Gramsci believed that the production of art and popular culture was a site of struggle for hegemony and also saw possibilities for the 'subaltern' classes to create alternative hegemonic projects. This is useful in understanding the situation in Nigeria with a history of access to foreign drama and film, the possibility for Nollywood to be a hegemonic force at home and abroad, and its function as a site to struggle for alternate hegemonic vision. (Storey, 2021; Kristiyono et al.2020)

Economic Factors

This article will delve into the economic aspects associated with this groundbreaking project. It is evident and undeniable to anyone with an ounce of knowledge that the films involved in this remarkable endeavour generate an immensely significant and unprecedented amount of capital. Beyond merely showcasing cultural heritage, this extraordinary project remarkably shines a spotlight on the indispensable financial facet, which undeniably plays a pivotal role in its success. It is awe-inspiring to witness and acknowledge the phenomenal financial triumph of Nigeria's film industry, which has undeniably established itself as a paramount leader in profitability and fiscal prosperity. There exists a plethora of solid and robust evidence that unconditionally supports and unequivocally affirms that the Nigerian-based film industry flourishes and prospers, accumulating a staggering and mind-boggling net worth amounting to millions upon millions of dollars.

An exemplary and noteworthy testament to the unprecedented prosperity of Nigeria's film industry can be witnessed through the exceptional gesture of the government, whereby the industry was bestowed with an awe-inspiring and monumental 200 million Naira loan during the late 1990s. This colossal sum of monetary infusion undoubtedly illustrates the sheer magnitude of success and the unfathomable financial gains experienced by the Nigerian film industry. Furthermore, during the same period, the illustrious British government graciously collaborated with utmost enthusiasm and fervour to establish and

provide a separate loan exclusively tailored to filmmakers who pioneered and produced captivating films set in enchanting Britain with compelling British characters as central figures. This enthralling collaboration created an extraordinary and exclusive loan of 100 million Naira, highlighting the unwavering commitment and belief in the visionary filmmakers' immense potential and indomitable spirit. These astounding loan amounts, when meticulous research and planning are undertaken, have the potential to be analyzed and thoroughly compared to the relatively modest budgets extended by the governments of India and Ghana, irrefutably showcasing an astronomical difference of unprecedented proportions, further accentuating the unparalleled triumph and extraordinary stature of Nigeria's film industry in the global cinematic landscape. (Oke, 2023; Umukoro et al.2020)

The reason for this incredibly generous loan is a direct response to the overwhelming mass popularity and, thus, the exceptional economic strength of the film industry. The government profoundly recognizes and values the significance of a thriving film industry as an invaluable means of providing unparalleled national and global exposure to Nigerian culture and tradition. It perceives Nollywood's exceptional power and influence as an extraordinarily potent tool, owing to its remarkable low-cost yet exceptionally impactful film production methods that seamlessly integrate Nigeria's rich traditional and vibrant modern aspects.

Expanding upon this notion, the President's highly esteemed top Economic Adviser emphatically stated that Nollywood, with all its economic potential, has become a significant contributor to Nigeria's GDP in all its mesmerizing glory and will indisputably emerge as a profound channel for Nigeria to assert its unparalleled "soft power" and wield its remarkable influence in a manner that genuinely shapes and moulds the global perception of Nigeria. In essence, this remarkable endeavour signifies the government's fervent hope and unwavering optimism regarding the potential to ingeniously and positively influence the international view of Nigeria.

It's important to recognize the government's unwavering determination and astute vision in countering these misperceptions. The government is fervently and effectively showcasing Nigeria's authentic beauty, cultural richness, and astounding creativity through the powerful medium of film, thereby offering a more balanced and positive view of the country.

Technological Advancements

In contrast, earlier phases of production, such as planning and budgeting, as well as the popularisation of video technology, took place in Nigeria. At the same time as "Living in Bondage" and Hausa video films were being created, regional success was evident, and national interest in the movie industry in Nigeria started to fade. Due to factors such as government censorship and the ban on the importation of foreign video films, this decline was helped. This is because the Lagos-based industry focused on creating what city marketing experts called "the product" - a product that would generate foreign revenue into the country. Therefore, the country's audiovisual policy was used to enforce cultural colonialism.

The steady decline of the Lagos-based industry resulted in increased local/regional video film production growth. This goes to show that technological advancements of the era shattered the monopoly of film production that had existed. With NTA's film and television workshop no longer operational, film production training facilities existed. This also affected incentives for the youth to pursue a career in film, considering the film industry path was no longer progressively a viable employment option. This all occurred at a time of dominance of video technology, as it was cheaper and more accessible. NTA and the private sector had used celluloid film, but the production, postproduction, and distribution facilities presented various constraints and soon were left right into 16mm film. This reduced the NTA production rate of celluloid features to about 5 per year. Instead, it fell into utilization in advertising. The youth that were university leavers, self-employed, or seeking employment seized new opportunities in a steady decline in the Nigerian economy. This was the era of the 90s SAP, also known as the Abacha era. It was a chance for individuals to help themselves and their

families financially.

Several youths turned to mass communication and media studies in Nigeria and abroad. Still, there was also a handful that saw the attainment of video technology as a viable opportunity.

An example is Ruke Amata's film *The Kilometre*, which used a Hi8 camera. Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry, has made significant technological advancements, creating films that meet and surpass international standards. This has enabled Nollywood to successfully make its mark and gain recognition on the global stage, including the coveted entry into the esteemed Oscars. The impact and influence of Nollywood cannot be overstated, as it continues to revolutionize the cinematic landscape by showcasing exceptional storytelling and embracing cutting-edge techniques. With each passing day, Nollywood further cements its position as a powerhouse in cinema, captivating audiences both domestically and internationally with its exceptional productions. (Akande, 2021; Krings and Simmert, 2020)

Cultural Identity and Representation

Nigeria has been divided along cultural, religious, and ethnic lines. This division has been largely a result of colonial history, which established English as the national language and created a disparate sense of Nigerian identity as an 'imagined community' consisting only of the various ethnic groups within what is now Nigeria's colonial boundaries. Since independence, many have found it necessary to 'perform' a Nigerian identity, combining aspects of pre-colonial history and tradition with the broader African and 'modern' postcolonial identities. Analyzing the rise of Nollywood, it has been suggested that the films provide a medium through which Nigerians can 're-narrate' their history and cultural identity. This is done in many films in many ways, showcasing the depth and complexity of the postcolonial narrative. Postcolonial identity, a quintessential subject matter, is deftly explored and negotiated through the employment of the trope that highlights a perpetual conflict between cherished traditions and the dominant force of modernity. One can discern the embodiment of this trope in various characters, such as the trumpeter in the immensely amusing *Osuofia in London*, the intriguingly entangled criminal in-laws in the captivating *Living in Bondage*, or the ardent suitor in the original incarnation of the spellbinding *Glamour Girls*. These films, with their ingenious use of satire and wit, effectively present a vivid portrayal of modern Nigeria grappling with an 'aura of confusion', where tradition is seemingly corrupted by the unyielding pursuit of Western ideals, brought forth with a dash of comedic brilliance. Moreover, these cinematic masterpieces serve as a glorious satirical reflection of the colonial legacy and boldly confront certain aspects of this historical narrative, fearlessly questioning the status quo. It is even posited that their manifestation within an essentially Anglophone cinematic medium, devoid of the need for subtitles, engenders a cohesive societal fabric, ultimately fostering a profound sense of shared sociolinguistic Nigerian identity. (Akande, 2021; Okadigwe, 2023; Okafor, 2020)

However, despite this, the characters and narratives in Nollywood films are pan-Nigerian and show the identity above negotiations in ways familiar to Nigeria's various ethnic groups. The trumpeter in *Osuofia in London* is an Igbo man, and his seedy search for a wealthy European widow represents modern Igbo identity. This suggests to the broader Nigerian public that this stereotype reflects present Nigeria, a suggestion reinforced by the film's international popularity.

Furthermore, the film goes beyond mere representation of the Igbo community and delves into the complexities of Nigerian society. Through the character's pursuit of a wealthy widow, the movie sheds light on the economic disparities and aspirations that resonate with the Igbo people and other Nigerian ethnic groups. It serves as a reminder that the desire for financial stability and social mobility cuts across cultural boundaries.

Osuofia in London draws attention to Nigeria's intricate web of cultural exchanges, making the experiences of many Nigerians who have migrated to different countries relatable. The challenges they face in reconciling their cultural heritage with the realities of a foreign environment echo the struggles and triumphs of Nigerians living abroad, fostering a

stronger connection between the film and its diverse audience.

In essence, *Osuofia in London* is a prime example of how Nollywood films transcend cultural boundaries. Its pan-Nigerian nature and relatable narratives serve as a testament to the resilience and diversity of Nigeria's people. As the film continues to gain international popularity, it stands as a testament to the richness and complexity of Nigerian cinema, captivating audiences worldwide with its universal themes while maintaining a distinct Nigerian identity.

Language Diversity

Language is a significant aspect of culture; this medium conveys many cultural products. In Nigeria, linguistic diversity is best represented in its films. There are over 520 languages in Nigeria, and language continues to be a focal point of clan and ethnic identification.

Nigeria is still primarily divided into its three major ethnic groups: the Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Kanuri, Fulani, Ibibio, Tiv, and Edo people. Moreover, among these diverse and vibrant groups, the Nigerian film industry, known as Nollywood, has flourished and gained immense domestic popularity. It is fascinating to observe that a substantial proportion of Nollywood productions are crafted in the languages of these various ethnicities. Films in Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo languages have garnered significant attention, captivating the hearts and minds of the Nigerian audience. However, it is worth noting that the richness of Nigeria's linguistic tapestry extends far beyond these three languages.

Indeed, the artistic realm of Nigerian cinema has ventured beyond the confines of English and reached further into the linguistic diversity within the country. Nollywood's embrace of various Nigerian languages, such as Kanuri, Fulfulde (Fulani), Ibibio, Tiv, and Edo, has not only captivated a broader audience within Nigeria but also helped preserve and promote Nigeria's multicultural heritage. This commitment to linguistic diversity is a testament to Nigeria's celebration of its multilingualism and the importance it places on preserving its linguistic heritage.

While English-language films undoubtedly play a significant role in catering to an international audience and expanding the global reach of Nigerian cinema, films made in indigenous languages have remained deeply rooted in their cultural context. These movies have provided a platform that showcases the unique customs, traditions, and stories of each ethnic group, allowing for a deeper understanding and appreciation of Nigeria's incredible diversity. The Edo language has also been showcased in many Nollywood films and has gained prominence globally. The recognition of the intra-national market for films in languages beyond English demonstrates that Nigeria is a nation that celebrates its multilingualism and recognizes the importance of preserving and promoting its linguistic heritage. Whether it be the melodious tones of Yoruba, the rhythmic beats of Hausa, or the lyrical beauty of Igbo, each language portrays a vibrant and authentic depiction of Nigerian culture.

As Nigeria continues to evolve and embrace its rich ethnic tapestry, it is essential to acknowledge the pivotal role that Nollywood plays in showcasing the immense talent, creativity, and diversity of its people. By expanding its focus beyond three significant languages, Nollywood has opened doors to new narratives and allowed for a more inclusive representation within the Nigerian film industry. This expansion has sparked interest domestically and internationally, as audiences worldwide are captivated by these films' unique stories and perspectives.

The success of Nollywood and its commitment to exploring Nigeria's linguistic mosaic are testaments to the power of diversity and cultural exchange. Nollywood has given a voice to communities previously underrepresented in the mainstream media by incorporating lesser-known languages, such as Edo, into its films. This inclusivity has enriched the film industry and fostered a sense of pride and empowerment among the speakers of these languages.

The Nigerian film industry, driven by Nollywood's tremendous success, thrives within its people's cultural diversity. A wide array of ethnic groups and languages contribute

towards producing captivating movies that resonate with domestic and international audiences. Recognizing and celebrating Nigeria's linguistic mosaic, Nollywood continues to pave the way for a more inclusive and united future where cultural heritage is cherished and shared with the world. By expanding linguistic representation, Nollywood ensures that every language can be heard and appreciated, fostering greater unity and understanding among Nigerians and beyond.

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To sum up, the Nigerian cinema industry flourishes amid its diverse culture, largely due to the remarkable achievements of Nollywood. The involvement of various ethnic groups and languages adds richness to creating captivating films that appeal to viewers at home and abroad. Nollywood's acknowledgement and appreciation of Nigeria's linguistic diversity sets an example for other industries and contributes towards a harmonious and inclusive future where cultural legacy is embraced and spread across the globe. (Ololade2024)

Nollywood's early video films were made for a Yoruba-speaking audience, and the Yoruba people's market demand largely propelled the industry forward. Nollywood's use of English has made it accessible to the rest of the country and increasingly to the rest of the African continent. Since English is Nigeria's colonial language and the language of unification, Nigerian films made in English are viewed domestically among all ethnic groups. English is the marker of Nollywood's modern films and international products.

Social Media and Digital Platforms

Social media and digital platforms have drastically altered how cultural products are circulated and consumed. Understanding how this has happened concerning Nollywood provides valuable insights into the intricacies of determining the relative Nigerianess of the films and how they are received and incorporated into global culture. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Myspace and their kin provide a new space for the sociability of viewing. Viewers of Nollywood films both within and outside Nigeria often report that viewing the films on DVD (as opposed to VCD) alone or in small groups is unsatisfying. This is in marked contrast to viewing at public viewing centres (where electricity supply and security situations permit) and (for the fortunate) at private screenings at the homes of middle-class and affluent Nigerians. At these latter kinds of venues, communal singing, chanting, and shouting at characters that are a distinctive part of the popular culture of the films is possible. Public and private watchers of Nollywood films have created an online community of 'Nollywoodists'; many regard online discussion of the films as a continuation of the viewing experience.

Social media and digital platforms such as Facebook have also been eagerly embraced by Nollywood producers for marketing and retail purposes, allowing direct access to potential consumers inside and outside Nigeria while bypassing (and bypassing payments to) traditional distributors and retailers of DVDs. Digital media's mobility and immateriality have created new opportunities for copyright piracy on an individual level. This has been a mixed blessing for Nollywood because Nollywood's global audience is also often a Nigerian diaspora audience, and pirates in Western countries can be the most influential distributors for this niche market. It is a different matter in Nigeria as intellectual property laws are under new pressure from trade agreements, and Nollywood is divided. With the rise of social media and digital platforms like Facebook, Nollywood producers have found new ways to market and sell their content. These platforms provide direct access to potential consumers both

within and outside of Nigeria, completely bypassing the need for traditional distributors and DVD retailers. However, the convenience and intangibility of digital media have also given rise to copyright piracy on an individual level. While this presents challenges for Nollywood, it also brings opportunities. Nollywood's global audience, which includes a significant Nigerian diaspora, often, relies on pirates in Western countries to distribute its content effectively within this niche market. However, the situation is different in Nigeria. Intellectual property laws face new pressures from trade agreements, and Nollywood itself is divided on how to approach this issue.

Diaspora Influence

The rapid expansion of Nollywood films across the African continent and within the diaspora makes it possible to imagine an African public sphere that transcends borders and unites diverse audiences. With their captivating storylines and distinct cultural references, these films provide a thought-provoking lens through which we can examine the complexities and potential globalization for Africans. Through the lens of Nollywood, we can explore the contradictions and opportunities that arise from the global consumption and production of African screen media.

Despite its origins as a Nigerian cultural phenomenon tailored to the tastes and interests of Nigerian audiences, Nollywood has evolved into a vibrant industry that extends far beyond its borders. This flourishing industry owes its success, in large part, to the enthusiastic support and viewership of other Africans, both on the continent and in the diaspora. Nollywood's reach and influence have transcended borders, captivating audiences from diverse backgrounds and fostering a profound sense of shared experience and cultural identity.

As these films continue to gain momentum and popularity, they serve as a powerful tool for showcasing the rich tapestry of African stories, histories, and experiences. Nollywood films not only entertain audiences but also shed light on the complexities and nuances of African societies. They tackle various themes, from social issues and political struggles to family dynamics and cultural traditions, providing a comprehensive and multi-dimensional portrayal of life on the continent.

Through African cinema, Nollywood has forged connections and created a community among Africans worldwide. Diasporic African audiences, in particular, find solace and connection in these films, as they serve as a link to their heritage and a source of pride in their diverse cultural backgrounds. Nollywood has given voice to previously ignored or overlooked narratives, offering a platform for underrepresented stories and celebrating the richness of African storytelling traditions.

Nollywood's impact reaches far beyond the silver screen, significantly contributing to the African economy. The industry has transformed into a thriving enterprise, generating employment opportunities, fostering talent development, and attracting local and international investments. Nollywood's success has inspired other African countries to invest in their film industries, creating a ripple effect that propels the growth and diversification of the regional cinematic landscape. This economic success is something that all Africans can take pride in and support.

In this era of globalization, Nollywood stands as a testament to the power of storytelling and the importance of representation in media. It transcends borders, language barriers, and cultural differences, bringing people together through the shared experience of cinema. As its influence continues to expand, Nollywood plays a crucial role in challenging stereotypes, amplifying the voices of African storytellers, and empowering its audience with a more accurate and diverse representation of Africa.

Given the relative paucity of positive representations of Africa in prevailing Euro-American media, the films have been readily received by Africans both within and outside the borders of Nigeria, who sincerely appreciate the unparalleled accessibility of the videos, the linguistically familiar nature of the dialogue, the recognizable blue urban settings portrayed, and most importantly, the vibrant celebration of African popular cultures. Through engaging interviews and informal discussions conducted with enthusiastic African viewers in

Botswana and Southern Africa (where the films have garnered immense popularity), Tanzania, Kenya, the United Kingdom, and the United States, it becomes abundantly clear that Nollywood films have undeniably bolstered a profound sense of pan-African sentiment. These films have accomplished this by offering African audiences an all-encompassing audio-visual platform, a shared common ground, to thoughtfully and meaningfully engage with the myriad of pressing issues impacting the continent.

Remarkably, the tremendous impact of Nollywood films goes far beyond mere social and cultural influence; they have also emerged as instrumental catalysts for economic growth and empowerment. These films have facilitated employment opportunities as an economic force, ensuring that many individuals are gainfully employed in various industry sectors. Furthermore, in some instances, these films have valiantly taken up the mantle of social advocacy by effectively addressing critical health concerns and championing human rights causes. This multifaceted aspect of the Nollywood phenomenon magnificently complicates the Nigerian state's role in cultural production. By transcending the confines of the national framework, Nollywood effortlessly blurs the boundaries between "national" and "diasporic" cinema, presenting a genuinely distinctive and inclusive cinematic experience.

Government Support and Policies

In the last 15 years, the government has played a vital role in fostering and advancing the remarkable growth of Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry. Through various initiatives, such as financing, funding, and implementing laws to regulate the industry, the government has effectively supported and uplifted Nollywood. As part of these efforts, the government has generously provided low-interest loans to filmmakers, enabling them to bring their creative visions to life. Recognizing the immense potential and significance of the film industry, the Nigerian government approved a significant one-time grant dedicated to developing short- and long-term film projects.

Moreover, the government also forged a collaborative partnership with the reputable British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to facilitate the training of Nigerian television producers. This collaboration has enhanced the skills and expertise of Nigerian producers and opened up new avenues for showcasing Nigerian stories and cultural heritage on an international platform. The impact of this collaboration is truly remarkable, as it has allowed Nigerian producers to deliver high-quality content that resonates with global audiences.

In another notable initiative, the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas Company (NLNG) established the prestigious "Nigeria Prize," immensely enriching Nigeria's literary prowess. This prestigious award has been instrumental in training and nurturing talented authors, empowering them to create literary masterpieces reflecting Nigeria's vibrancy and diversity. Significantly, many of these acclaimed authors have viewed the training as an incredible opportunity to transform their written works into captivating films, thanks to the same prestigious prize now being extended to filmmakers as well.

Embraced as a unique and multifaceted avenue of support, the NLNG has emerged as an indispensable ally in fostering the growth and development of the Nigerian film industry. Its unwavering commitment and steadfast support have accelerated the progress of the film world in Nigeria, ushering in a new era of artistic expression and creative brilliance. With the government's resolute determination and continuous efforts, Nollywood is poised to reach even greater heights, captivating the world with its rich narratives, exceptional talent, and unparalleled cinematic brilliance. (Agina, 2020)

Globalization and Transnationalism

Deregulation and new satellites have led to an explosion in international television and broadcast opportunities. It is this trend that Nollywood began to ride on its success. In foreign lands, a diaspora of Nigerians consisting of expatriated workers and students would help grow overseas markets for Nigerian-made films. This, in turn, has led to a boom in the film industry in which an African film can be profitable. High unemployment in Nigeria and poor living standards lead many Nigerians to seek greener pastures. Brain drain was a concept that was once used predominantly to describe migration from the third world to the

first. Western countries are now inducing migration from places like Nigeria by making obtaining work visas and residency easier. One of the unfortunate side effects of this has been an increase in demand by Nigerians and Nigerian expats for films depicting aspects of Western lifestyle and the Western world. With the culture of the Nigerian expat being directly exposed to outside media, there has been a cultural backlash in which people have sought to reclaim their own culture and national identity. H. E. Langa talks of South Africa's post-apartheid desire for cultural sovereignty as being a factor in the success of the South African broadcasting and film industry. This can be paralleled with the Nigerian desire to be free from colonial legacy and the desire for a cultural awakening. A prime example of the cultural renaissance is the increased popularity of soccer in Nigeria. Considering the follow-on effect of Langa's work and the situation in Nigeria, Nollywood has been a way for Nigerians to create a cultural resurgence through the media.

During the 1990s, a film industry known as Nollywood emerged in Lagos, Nigeria. Inspired by Hollywood, Nollywood quickly gained popularity both within Nigeria and internationally. While it is uncertain whether Nollywood's rise can be directly attributed to globalization, it is undeniable that the world's interconnectedness played a role in its success. As communication and media technologies advanced, Nollywood found a platform to showcase its films to a global audience. Additionally, Nigerians living abroad, including professionals and students, played a significant part in creating a demand for Nigerian films in foreign markets. This, in turn, led to a thriving film industry in Nigeria and brought substantial profits to African cinema. However, the motivation behind Nigerians' interest in Western lifestyles and values depicted in these films can be linked to the high levels of unemployment and poor living conditions in Nigeria, prompting many to seek better opportunities overseas. Recognizing this talent pool, Western nations made it easier for Nigerian immigrants to obtain work visas and residency rights, further fueling the desire for films that portrayed Western culture. Nevertheless, the Nigerian diaspora has also shown a desire to reconnect with their cultural heritage and national identity, which has led to a resurgence of interest in Nigerian traditions and sports, like soccer. This cultural reawakening parallels South Africa's post-apartheid efforts to reclaim its cultural sovereignty and has contributed to the success of the South African film industry. Similarly, Nollywood has provided a platform for Nigerians to embrace their cultural heritage and celebrate their identity through the power of media. (Oguamanam, 2020; Anyanwu, 2022; Idyo and Methuselaha; Simon, 2022)

Nollywood's Impact on African Cinema

This study is conscious that the coming of Nollywood has dislocated the domination of African cinema. It is important to note that the term has often been used as a heuristic device, which, on the one hand, tends to conflate African cinema with Third Cinema and, to this extent, with a theological project of decolonization. Many critics of Nollywood need to understand this cinema within the frame of Third Cinema, or indeed, much earlier desires to create a cinema in an African image. For these critics, the coming of Nollywood is a betrayal of Third Cinema's mission to create and sustain an alternative African public sphere. This criticism cannot be applied to Nollywood because broadcast TV crushed the new wave and created a dependency on the state. In countries such as Nigeria and Kenya, Nollywood has an improved reach compared to earlier cinema. It has an indeed broader popular base. (Endong, 2023)

Despite the ongoing debate in multiple African countries, Nollywood has proven revolutionary in creating a new platform and understanding of how we conceive African cinema globally. It challenges the mainstream commentary on African image-making, which often clings to the idea of a preexisting Africa perpetuated through European ethnographic documentation and missionary films. These notions of an essential Africa, extending from *Cry the Beloved Country* to contemporary films like *Hotel Rwanda*, only present a narrative of postcolonial failure and ethical imperialism.

Undeniably, Nollywood's lack of an organized exportation network has limited its potential as a massive tool of cultural diplomacy. However, the mere existence of Nollywood

as a cinema that is utterly modern and postcolonial, unburdened by any external influences, can be seen as a significant step in another direction. Through its mass storytelling conventions and stock themes, Nollywood offers an alternative to the existing options in African cinema. It becomes a powerful voice showcasing African filmmakers' immense creativity and resilience, providing a fresh perspective that resonates with audiences worldwide.

Celebrity Culture and Fan Base

A growing body of literature focuses on celebrity culture and its relationship to Nollywood. Some critics suggest that the presence of print and electronic media has brought about an intense obsession with celebrity culture and a culture of stardom. These critics argue that Nollywood stars often transcend their fame and become celebrities in Nigeria and English-speaking parts of West Africa. Their screen names are called out and referred to in everyday conversations, making them iconic societal figures.

Fans of Nollywood films passionately feel the impact of translations as it brings them closer to the stars they admire. Whether it is through translating the actors' speech from Nigerian languages to English in a film or using subtitles, these linguistic tools bridge the gap between the audience and their idols. Genevieve Nnaji, a legendary Nollywood actress, serves as a compelling example. A dedicated fan shared their experience of a film being translated to English specifically for them, stating, "Imagine how many fans she has for someone to do that!" This incident exemplifies the deep connection between the fans and the stars.

In addition to traditional media, the internet has become a powerful tool for fans to indulge in their obsessions. Platforms like MySpace.com enable fans to create "fake" personal or band profiles for celebrities, providing a sense of closeness and accessibility. Notably, even Nnaji and other Nollywood stars have these fake profiles, leading to dedicated fans engaging in lengthy correspondences and even forming relationships with these impostors. To address this issue, actress Steph-Nora Okere took matters into her own hands by creating her website, allowing fans to connect with her directly and avoid the confusion caused by fake profiles.

Furthermore, the influence of celebrity culture can be observed in the significant resurgence of fashion in Nigeria's urban spaces over the past decade. Nigerian and Ghanaian fashion magazines have emerged, featuring Nollywood stars as prominent figures. The impact of these stars on the fashion scene is undeniable, with reports from the Nigerian Television Authority detailing how fans overwhelmed/flooded the FAME Nigeria 2007 fashion and design show to catch a glimpse of their favourite celebrities.

The convergence of celebrity culture and Nollywood has significantly impacted society. The fixation on celebrities, the adaptation of films, and the rise of fashion in urban areas all indicate that Nollywood stars have emerged as revered figures and trendsetters, captivating the admiration and thoughts of enthusiasts across West Africa. (Artz)

Accessibility and Piracy

Accessibility in terms of technological innovations and investment in expensive film equipment largely explains the Nigerian move toward video film. The theatre, being expensive to attend, has largely fallen to the wayside for the Nigerian population. Going out to eat and enjoying the day are common, while watching television is a daily activity. Akin and Mustapha quote Marc Esanu, who states, "In Nigeria, we watch movies at home. It's a strategy so that our market can grow. People watch more video than they watch TV so they can save time, others can follow." Video Home System and its recent successor, the Digital Video Disk, are prevalent in Nigeria. These forms of media, in conjunction with the VCR and DVD players, have brought a new movie-going experience to the Nigerian people. They have a wealth of movies to choose from in their home and can watch videos often during the rental period. The everyday Nigerian now can affordably watch a wealth of movies in the comfort of their own home. This equals a substantial opportunity for Nollywood producers to market their movies to the population.

On the other hand, several people are financially unable to rent or buy films and are often considered pirating the movies. Various market researches has shown that there are tiers of movie viewers who will buy the film at the shop, rent the film, buy a pirated copy, rent a pirated copy, or go to a viewing centre to watch a film with other peers. These viewing centres can be located in a video club or someone's home and are also an extension of the new movie-going culture in Nigeria. Verbosity among some Nigerian students was captured by Esanu, who quotes a student telling him this was, in fact, not piracy. The student felt that no one could afford to buy all the movies, so the objective was to save time and money. The pirated copies would satisfy those who could not buy them. A Tribe of Judah by Funke Akindele and many other blockbuster movies have sadly encountered the detrimental effects of piracy, as these films were discovered on a Telegram platform, available for free downloads, even while they were still being screened in cinemas.

This unscrupulous act of piracy has caused significant harm to the film industry, leading to financial losses and undermining the hard work and creativity of talented filmmakers and actors. Society recognizes the importance of supporting artists and respecting their intellectual property, as piracy not only hampers their livelihood but also discourages the production of exceptional cinematic experiences that we all cherish and enjoy. (Oguamanam, 2020)

Where there has been clarity and agreement, accessibility is considered to be the ease of purchasing or obtaining a movie. At the same time, piracy is the illegal or unofficial reproduction for public consumption. As previously mentioned, Nigerians have the opportunity to watch movies many times over in their home. This is also an excellent opportunity for movie makers, who now have a much larger consumer base and the chance to directly sell movies to consumers as opposed to the distributor model that occurred with celluloid film. However, there is high hope for a new anti-piracy campaign funded by USAID and Nigeria's Intellectual Property Law Institute and supported by The Motion Picture Association of America. (Simon, 2024)

Marketing and Distribution Strategies

Nollywood's marketing and distribution strategies are a significant cause of industrial success, as it has allowed the industry to market its films to specific target audiences with minimal expenditure. Before assessing these factors, it is essential to highlight a general trend in film marketing over recent times. Traditional Hollywood was, in many cases, embarking on a large-scale expenditure using a saturation strategy, which was believed to be that the more you spend, the more you prosper. Films were made with an average budget of \$10 million, with an additional \$10 million for prints and advertising. The belief was that the advertising should be uniform across the globe to get the film to as many people as possible. Success would come from a quick start at the box office, and the strategy would aim to market the film as a blockbuster. This strategy was high risk and often led to high-profile flops: "A successful film for a major studio is a film that makes \$160 million and spends \$150 million to do it" (Russell Schwartz, New Line Cinema). This trend is traced back to a corporate mentality involved with film, in which filmmakers have increasingly become less independent and more trusting of significant studio expenditures to ensure success. Today, countless distribution channels range from YouTube to streaming platforms. This vast selection of outlets enables content creators to reach a wider audience and foster greater engagement with their viewership. With the rise of digital media consumption, these diversified distribution avenues revolutionized the entertainment industry, allowing for exponential content creation and consumption growth. As established studios and independent creators continue to tap into these diverse platforms, the entertainment landscape continues to evolve, offering limitless possibilities for creators and consumers. From the convenience of on-demand streaming services to the interactivity of live streams, the abundance of distribution channels has undoubtedly transformed how we consume and engage with media. This transformative shift has opened doors for emerging talents to showcase their work and has given rise to a new generation of digital storytellers who capture and captivate global audiences. As technology advances and the demand for

content continues to soar, we can only expect this diverse range of distribution channels to expand further, providing endless opportunities for creative expression and discovery. (Osunwa et al.)

International Recognition and Film Festivals

Nollywood films have become a regular feature at major high-profile film festivals of global significance, indicating the critical acclaim the industry has attracted. For instance, 'The Wedding Party' and 'Lionheart' have garnered international attention and accolades. Silverbird's agreement with the American distributors at the Los Angeles film festival in 2005 was, according to the CEO of Silverbird, 'the breakthrough' for Nollywood films. This also resulted in a landmark distribution deal to release 20 Nigerian films across the United States, previously unseen by any other African film industry. Such involvement showcased Nollywood to the rest of the world and how other stakeholders, particularly the Hollywood industry, could benefit from its presence. Silverbird's subsidiary, Ster Kinekor, also secured a deal with the New York African Film Festival, and the films were exhibited in more than 90 cinemas across South Africa. This show to what extent Nollywood has attracted an international audience and acted as a driving force to stimulate interest in Nigeria and Africa. The Zuma Film Festival, a highly anticipated and remarkable festival hosted in Nigeria, will not only act as a captivating platform to showcase and celebrate mesmerizing films made in Nigeria but also mesmerize and captivate its esteemed national and international audience. Over the years, this vibrant festival has garnered immense attention, attracting globally acclaimed filmmakers and esteemed actors not only from the enchanting realm of Hollywood but also from the majestic realm of Bollywood, creating a majestic convergence of talents. The extraordinary achievements of this illustrious festival have been widely chronicled and celebrated in the national media, solidifying its prestigious status and igniting a renewed admiration for the ever-evolving Nollywood industry.

Moreover, the resplendent reach of Nollywood-specific film festivals has remarkably transcended geographical boundaries, establishing a ubiquitous presence at esteemed African film festivals held across mesmerizing continents of Europe, America, and Asia. It is truly awe-inspiring to witness the resounding appreciation and recognition of Nigerian films at these grandiose events, which are graced with the magnificence of Nollywood creations. Notably, the annual African film festival held in the magnificent city of New York has consistently embraced the allure and splendour of Nollywood, featuring its unparalleled masterpieces with unwavering enthusiasm. As such, these illustrious film festivals profoundly bridge the gap between the vibrant Nollywood industry and the resplendent African diaspora, enabling a deepening connection and fostering a shared cultural heritage.

Furthermore, these prestigious film festivals serve as invaluable platforms for the ever-evolving Nollywood industry to embark upon a wondrous journey of enlightenment. Observing and imbibing the rich tapestry of diverse experiences within the African continent, Nollywood indulges in a captivating cinematic odyssey, embracing the opportunity to learn from the magnificence of other African film industries. These moments of transcendence nurture and enhance Nollywood's artistic prowess and inspire a relentless pursuit of excellence, propelling the industry to unprecedented heights.

The Zuma film festival and other remarkable Nollywood-specific festivals testify to Nigeria's resplendent artistry and captivating narratives. With its resounding international acclaim, these festivals cultivate an enduring legacy of admiration, infusing the Nollywood industry with an inexorable spirit of innovation. United by a shared passion for filmmaking, Nollywood proudly steps forward, creating a symphony of artistic marvels reverberating across continents, continents that stand in awe of Nigeria's cinematic brilliance. (Utian-Preston, 2022)

III. Conclusion

This study began by identifying Nollywood as a product of globalization. It set out to explain the factors behind its recent global diffusion, which were the cultural and social factors that were the most influential. The finding highlighted in this exploration is that it is

like global interactions between local and foreign media cultures, economies, and political influences that cultural products are created at the national or local level but possess the potential for global diffusion and consumption. This finding is relevant beyond Nollywood, and the uniqueness of the Nollywood story lies in identifying the specific cultural and social processes behind creating a successful cultural product with global potential in Nigeria. Nollywood's success not only demonstrates the power of cultural products to transcend national boundaries but also challenges the dominance of Western cinema, paving the way for a more diverse and inclusive global film industry.

The understanding that Nigeria employs a form of cultural imperialism utilizing Western technology to craft its unique cultural product with vast potential for global diffusion is an immensely significant finding. This groundbreaking discovery challenges the prevailing belief concerning cultural imperialism theory, especially regarding the imposition of Western culture and technology, thereby highlighting the urgent need for further extensive research and meticulous analysis of numerous developing nations that employ analogous strategies. Indeed, it can be theoretically inferred that the dependency theory could be effectively applied to Nollywood, as the industry's remarkable potential for global success has been driven by the injection of foreign capital. However, it is essential to note that this particular concept has yet to be fully explored within the realm of this study. These extraordinary findings unequivocally contribute to a significantly enhanced understanding of the intricate mechanisms of globalization from the perspective of cultural interconnectedness, thereby providing a more precise and refined definition of how culturally infused products can be meticulously crafted with unparalleled potential for widespread global diffusion and influence.

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