

Nollywood Marketing System: The Economics of Survival

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Abstract

In Nollywood, the production and distribution/marketing of the films are both in the firm control of marketers. The marketers have metamorphosed into a cabal that seems difficult to circumvent and this is a problem. This paper attempts an exposé of the Nollywood Marketing/Distribution Chain to aid aspiring Nollywood marketers. Both documentary research and in-depth interview of 18 marketers drawn from the Nollywood marketing hubs of Idumota and Alaba International both in Lagos State, and Electro-Mart Shopping Complex Onitsha in Anambra State provided the data used. It is discovered that a change in the marketing situation in Nollywood, and subsequently its development to compete favourably in the global film market, can only be expected when trained film marketers are able to penetrate the markets and be part of marketing activities of the industry. Until this is achieved, the industry's hope to progress beyond its present state is not in sight. Theatre and Film Studies Departments in Nigeria are admonished to start cross disciplinary training in film marketing right from the undergraduate level to aid aspiring film entrepreneurs in Nigeria. This should involve the Departments of Marketing and Economics to be functional. In the long run, this will enhance improved industry performance of Nollywood.

Introduction

Attesting to the originality of her work titled "Nollywood and the Home Video Revolution: Implications for Marketing Video Film in Africa" (2008), Stevina Evuleocha declared thus: "there have been no studies of Nollywood published to date" (p. 407). This, to say the least, is not in any way correct. There exists a robust body of literature on the Nigerian video film industry, which is popularly called Nollywood. Jonathan Haynes' publication titled "Bibliography of Academic Work on Nigerian and Ghanaian Video Films" (2012) shows the existence of a whole lot of works on aspects of Nollywood right from the inception of the industry. What must be pointed out, however, is that there is paucity of literature in the area of film distribution/marketing in Nollywood. Taking Haynes' publication cited above for instance, out of the 654 works recorded, only seven (7) works deal with marketing/distribution in Nollywood.

It is undisputable that more than any other function in business, marketing deals directly with customers. It is here that the product is brought to life and connected with the consumers; attempts are also made to recoup the funds spent, and to make profits for the sustenance of the business venture. Marketing is a critical part of any business and has overbearing effects and influences on such a business. At the heart of modern marketing principles and practices is the creation of customer value and satisfaction. To attract new customers and to keep current ones is the twofold goal of marketing. This is achieved by promising superior value as well as by delivering satisfaction. Effective marketing means a well orchestrated plan aimed at seeing the product from conception through production till when it gets to the consumer. The success of any organization (large or small, local or international, profit making or non-

profit making) depends on sound marketing. Film could be said to be a social product and as such falls under social needs. Those who see products as only physical objects will attest to the fact that a film recorded on tape or disc, and sold for home consumption becomes a tangible/physical product. Those who view films in cinema theatres or via content delivery platforms, buy such films as services. Whichever way, marketing occurs when people decide to satisfy needs and wants through exchange.

Film production is capital intensive. It involves the works of very many persons and professions – what Gross and Ward (2007, p. 2) choose to term “an army.” The business aspect of film is where the film is brought to life, and connected with the audience, with a view to sourcing for financial patrons and sponsors, recouping the funds spent, and making profits for the sustenance of the industry as well as the professions and professionals engaged in the industry. These have overbearing influences on filmmaking. The film industry is a business whose ultimate goal is to make money. With respect to the Nigerian film industry, Nollywood, the economic aspect of its evolution, survival and sustenance cannot be over-emphasized. In the exact words of Ekwuazi (2008, p. 36), “Nollywood is like the Nigerian economy: you always wonder why it hasn’t collapsed.” As an art in progress, Nollywood has its attendant problems. Critics, scholars and researchers have always identified problematic issues surrounding Nollywood. Some of the major issues often raised include plot development, directing styles, acting, production designs, camera placement, gender sensitive issues, thematic preoccupation, language, and moral code. The real problem with the industry however is its commercial framework which is largely responsible for the rudderless nature and the stunted growth of the industry. The provision of a standard workable marketing framework for Nollywood is the most important step in ensuring the speedy growth of the industry to be able to compete favourably in the global film market. Yet, scholarly contributions have not focused much on such a key area as restructuring Nollywood’s present unproductive state of marketing. This aspect of film production, often referred to as “the invincible art” (*Screenonline*), is well known only to those within the industry. Herein precisely lies the *raison d’etre* of this work- an expose of the marketing/distribution chain of Nollywood as it re-echoes and critically evaluate these questions from Ekwuazi (2008, p. 36): “Do we praise Nollywood for trying at all? Or do we condemn it for trying badly?”

The Nature of Film Distribution

Nollywood, the video film industry in Nigeria, is different from most other film industries in many respects. According to Hennig-Thurau *et al*, “Traditional distribution for a film begins with a theater premiere, followed by a release to retail markets (rental or sale of DVDs), display on premium satellite or cable channels, and, eventually, television.” (2007, p. 63) With this chain, a major part of a film’s revenue is made through the theatre premiere. Femi Odegbemi supports this view in these words

In most other creative economies, a film’s commercial life span starts normally with a box office or cinema release, then it moves on to video release, broadcast on pay-television, broadcast on public television, and finally on other ancillary media (i.e. video games, cartoons etc) and merchandising. This is typical marketing chain of the major film studios in the UK, USA, India and even South Africa nearby. (2010, para. 6)

In the above arrangement, two things are important facts to note. Firstly, there are other money making avenues for film apart from the release and sale on video. But this does

not apply to Nollywood in strict terms. Secondly, there is a distributor in the advanced film cultures. According to Adesanya, such a person is an entrepreneur:

The distributor is not a filmmaker or producer but an entrepreneur, a businessman trading in films as an entertainment product. The distributor options or acquires the Theatrical Release Rights of a film with market potential and puts into circulation (that is the market) via rental outlets (that is the cinema halls) of exhibitor(s) who is/are affiliated to his company. Alternatively, the distributor owns his own chain of cinema halls; he is totally responsible for the wholesale and retail marketing of the film. (2006, p. 104)

It is the distributor who is completely in charge of the wholesale and retail marketing of the film through exhibitions in cinema halls. Yet the point has to be made that the distributor here is usually “not a one-man affair as it sounds. A distributor is usually a company, duly registered as a corporate body with its full complement of staff.” (Adesanya, 2006, p. 105) In Nollywood, the release pattern of films favours straight-to-VCDs/DVDs that are immediately pushed into the markets. Here, wholesalers and various shades of retailers are needed to make the products (the released films) reach potential consumers (the film audience). Hence, the term distributor is used in Nollywood to stand for wholesalers of the video films who acquire the films in bulk from the Executive Producer Marketers at relatively low prices and sells to retailers.

The implication of the above is that there are no other money making avenues for Nollywood films apart from the release and sale on video. Many years ago, during the glorious years of cinema in Nigeria, people had limited options for entertainment which made movies one of the key options available at the time. Going to watch a film in a cinema theatre with family and friends was a favourite pastime especially to those who could afford it. With the advent of technology came an explosion in the entertainment options available, making the option of watching movies in the theatres less attractive to many. People now prefer to watch movies in at home, along with family members and/or friends. Hence, Marketing becomes a critical factor in deciding the success of movies. It therefore becomes important that Nollywood strives to constantly improve in distribution/marketing modes to ensure a competitive edge in both national and international film distribution circuits.

System of Marketing System in Nollywood

In this section, we discuss the personnel involved in marketing system in Nollywood.

The Executive Producer (EP) Marketer

What the home video producer lacked in a distributor – cum – exhibitor, he found in the marketer. The home video marketer not only bank rolled the production, he took effective control thereby guaranteeing return on his investment (Adesanya, 2006, p. 106)

This statement best describes the marketer in Nollywood. Film scholars and historians are agreed on the fact that the business prospect of the video film in Nigeria was made prominent in 1992 with the release of the video film, *Living in Bondage*, by Kenneth Nnebue. The commercial success story of *Living in Bondage* sent a signal to some business men, especially those of Igbo extraction, that there is a lucrative but long-neglected market in the

video film. This led to the re-channeling of their resources into the video film production and marketing. They were quick to find out, according to M'Bayo & Onabajo, that

...Nigerian home videos move very fast and return very high yields. They embraced the sector whole-heartedly, deploying their instincts as businessmen: pumped money into the sector and in the process unleashed a kind of production frenzy never before witnessed in any part of the continent... (2009, p. 75)

These businessmen adopted the Nigerian business mentality of jumping into any business that is lucrative at any point in time. The views of Onabajo and Odoe that "many who get into the industry do so not for the passion that they have about it but for financial gains which are actually the wrong motive for going into such a venture." (2009, p. 91) Writing on the role of the businessmen-cum- executive producers, Ekpenyong submits as follows:

For them, film is perceived only as money-spinner. And so, driven by the impetus of what quick profits can be made from film, they engage in producing as many films as possible within the shortest time frame, with the barest artistic and technical considerations. (2005, p. 75)

At the moment, the marketers are the policymakers in the industry. Sandra Obioha, a Nollywood actress, is cited in M' Bayo and Onabajo (2009, p. 75) as expressing the view that "The marketers are the kingpins. They are the king makers. They have the knife and they have the yam, and you will only get roles if they wish, or if they like you, or if they like your face." One can have a feel of the weight and strength of the marketer in Nollywood from this view of Gukas, as re-echoed by Kwaghkondo Agber, that:

... the marketers either fund projects generated by producers or buy off the final products from the producer. In some instances, the marketers on their own come up with their own project and commission producers to produce it or even seek to produce it themselves. This clearly underscores the indispensability of the marketers in the industry. In other words, both the final product and its marketing rest with the marketer. Projects that have sought to forge ahead within (sic) their input have met with very little success because the marketers who control the industry would not distribute the finished products. (2006, p. 76)

Nollywood has been a private sector driven initiative right from inception. The Nollywood marketer assumes more than the role of an entrepreneur trading on film as an entertainment product. The production of the films and their distribution/marketing are in the firm grip and control of the marketers. This underscores the indispensability of the marketer in Nollywood. This situation is not likely to change in the nearest future as these marketers explore their market pioneering advantages to the fullest. The marketers have metamorphosed into a cabal that cannot be broken or circumvented in the industry. Ogunsuyi (2006, p. 124) tags them "the czar of the industry." The place of the marketer in Nollywood is estimated by Ogunleye in these words:

The Nollywood distribution system in 2006 is dominated by a large population of small-scale distributors, known as 'marketers', and it is estimated that in about 80% of cases the marketer controls each part of the

value chain, including financing, production and distribution. (as cited in Bud, 2014: 92)

There have been efforts in recent years by independent producers/directors to break away from the overbearing influences of the marketers. These independent producers/directors have ventured to distribute their films through other channels, such as cinema exhibition and a new producer-owned market. One of such efforts is the creation of an alternative film market at the Censors Market located opposite the National Population Commission along Babs Animasaun Street Surulere, Lagos. According to Ayakoroma (2014, p. 105), the idea of the alternative film market came up because of the stranglehold of the marketers:

The realization was that the Idumota marketers had a stranglehold on video film production and distribution, which was not healthy for the growth of the industry. It was such that once a film did not feature artists of their choice, the EPs would not market such films. Where they even agreed to market such films, they offered pittance that may not even cover the production cost.

The Film Cooperative of Nigeria (FCON), under Don Pedro Obaseki as the pioneer head, sought to float this alternative film market where producers can distribute their films without much of the harsh conditions the major marketers imposed. Even at that, this alternative film market never really prospered like the film markets at Idumota and Alaba in Lagos, Iwaka Road in Onitsha and Pound Road in Aba. This still owes to the overriding monopoly of the marketers. Hence, “as the Surulere market is like a ghost town presently, as opposed to the beehive of activities at Idumota (Lagos), Upper Iwaka (Onitsha), and Pound Road (Aba)” (Ayakoroma, 2014, p. 105). To penetrate the markets and be able to enter the marketers’ guild, it is necessary to work as an apprentice under an established marketer for an agreed number of years (Haynes, 2013, p. 12; Ayakoroma, 2014, p. 71; Bud, 2014, p. 95). As successive generations of apprentices become free of their masters, they set themselves up in the business. According to Bud, “The guilds take in a new group of marketers from this pool every two to three years, and most join one of the two largest associations. They are relatively open to new entrants as long as the entrant goes through the apprenticeship programme...” (2014, p. 95).

Distributors

As earlier stated, the term distributor is used in Nollywood to stand for wholesalers of the video films who acquire the films in bulk from the Executive Producer Marketers at relatively low price and the sells to retailers. The distributors get their stock of films from the EP marketers in bulk at a slightly lower price - a sort of block booking. In many occasions, the distributors metamorphose into EP marketers when they have gathered enough money to go into shooting. Worthy of note is the fact that the marketers themselves also function as distributors helping distribute the films of their colleagues. The business sense here is that while they work on their own films, they make some money distributing for their contemporaries. They also use such opportunity to pass information to their customers about their films in the making (mostly in line with the reigning storyline or genre). Finally, they also secure the goodwill of their colleagues who will in return reciprocate and distribute for them when their films are finally released into the market. Distribution in Nollywood is also mainly entered through apprenticeship or transfer/change of business line.

Content Delivery Platforms

The non-theatrical marketing of Nollywood films is the thrust here. By this, we mean buying and consuming Nollywood products as services. Hence the consumers here buy the content or soft copies of the films. The marketers sell some performance and ancillary rights to few video clubs/video parlours, television station, cable stations and/or internet streaming sites for a certain amount of money. While the marketers have faith in the amount at which such rights are sold, many other practitioners frown at the prices seeing them as peanuts. The prices for such rights range between forty thousand naira (N40, 000) to a price which may be slightly above a hundred thousand naira. It is alleged that Africa Magic pays the highest for such rights. It is said that they pay about One Thousand Dollars per film. Joy TV, Cine Afrik, Afrotainment, M-Net, Multichoice, CTL, Ben TV-Sky Channel 194, Afrika Videos, Iroko TV, Pay pal, Africa Mars, iTunes, Multi TV and Afrovision are some cable television stations and internet streaming sites for Nollywood films.

Content delivery has been a problematic issue in Nollywood. While some stakeholders accuse it of killing the industry, others see it as helping the industry grow. The truth of the matter is that online distribution and content delivery platforms are here to stay. This is one truth that Nollywood filmmakers should accept and brace up to because “the existing traditional distribution system has been stretched to its limit, unable to satisfy the ever growing audience Nollywood has generated, all over the world” (Amenechi, 2011:25). The only issue to tackle about this is how to fashion out workable rules of engagement that will benefit the industry and the stakeholders. Yet, it should be borne in mind that the content delivery platforms will not take over the tradition mode of distribution in Nigeria in the nearest future. State of technological development in the country, literacy levels, technological know-how, power outage issues and poverty are issues that have continued to bar a larger part of Nollywood audience from the content delivery and online distribution platforms. Also, the mode of consumption of popular art in Nigeria should be noted here. The Nigerian (and indeed African) audience prefer to consume popular arts as a public which displays the sense of “coming together” (Okome, 2007). Per view type of screening, which the content delivery and online distribution platforms favour, is a disruption of the group viewing experience and the communicative interaction it induces among viewers. This viewing culture is not peculiar to Nollywood but has been part of the cinema tradition in Nigeria. Ekwazi had emphasized this viewing tradition long ago in these words, “part of the total meaning of any film derives significantly from the viewing circumstances, from the communicative interaction among the audience, a triadic relationship involving each member of the audience with the others, and, of course, with the screen” (1991, p. 25). This is a distinct part of viewing culture in Nigeria.

Cinema Theatres

Showing Nollywood film in cinema theatres has become a marketing trend in the industry. Such films are premiered in the cinema theatres and shown on a number of other days in the same theatre or taken to other theatres. Some are premiered and/or screened in theatres abroad before they are released on VCDs and DVDs. This strategy, however, accounts for less than 5% in the marketing framework of Nollywood films as there are very few standard theatres in contemporary Nigeria. Also, the cinema going culture is not active in the country. There are also gray areas in this distribution strategy. Jonathan Haynes describes this marketing strategy this way:

Around 2010 the term “new Nollywood” began to be used to describe an emerging strategy for escaping from the grind of low-budget and therefore low-quality films produced for the Nollywood VCD market... the aspiration to so escape is not new... but there is a new, well-defined business strategy:

screening films at the new upscale multiplex theatres that have been opening in Nigerian cities since 2006, and then taking the films abroad to screen for diasporic Nigerian and other African audiences and sometimes to film festivals. (2013, p. 15)

Retailers

There exist in Nollywood, retailers who help get the industry's products to the final consumers. In virtually all the cities in Nigeria, film markets are common sights. The film merchants in these markets get their regular supply of the newly released films on regular basis from the EP marketers or from the distributors. Most times, the films are supplied on a 'sale or return' basis. The supply of the video films to the merchants has been greatly enhanced by the 'night bus' activities in the transportation sector. There are various shades of retailing in the industry:

Film Market Video Stalls

There are film market video stalls scattered all over the country. The term market is used herein to stand for the physical place where buyers and sellers gather to exchange their goods (Kotler & Armstrong, 1999, p. 9). In virtually all the cities in Nigeria, film markets are common sights. A typical video film stall in Nollywood is the size of a double bed or bigger, and has shelves and/or table-like platforms for the display of the films. Provisions are made for television sets and DVD players. With these, some of the films are screened mainly for two major reasons. Firstly, this is a way of testing the films for the customers. The level of mistrust in the country is such that no one would want to risk buying a product not tested. Even the tested and certified ones have in many cases been found faulty. The second usage of the television sets and DVD players found in the video stalls is to serve the purpose of continuously screening the films to keep the stalls busy and attractive to the customers. This entails the generation of cacophonous deafening noise from the screening equipments and the pollution from the generating sets. To this noise and pollution, the sellers, buyers and the entire neighbourhood are no strangers. Any available spaces around the stalls are used for the pasting of film posters.

Street Video Stalls

Apart from the video film markets where there are video stalls for merchandizing of Nollywood films, the streets of the urban and semi-urban centres are flooded with stalls trading on video films. The street video stall owners locate such stalls strategically on major streets where population is dense. Onookome Okome believes that strategic streets for such a business are streets "through which motorists must navigate to access roadways back home or to other destination at the close of the work day" (2007, p. 7). Two major variants of the street video stall exist in the country. In the first variant, the Pure Video Stalls, there exist stalls set out specifically for the merchandizing of films and musical pieces. In the second variant, the Mixed Video Stalls, there are stalls engaged in other business ventures with a part of the stall used for the business of film merchandizing. Both variants still serve the purpose of bringing the marketing of Nollywood products close to the people.

For the first variant, street video stall proprietors rent concrete shops or erect make-shift wooden shops for the solo purpose of selling films, such stalls are positioned in such a way that their television sets face the streets. The screening of films in these stalls can go on all day long where there is public power supply. Otherwise the screenings "are done mostly in the evening when the sun has set and the atmosphere more tolerable for bystanders who casually stop for a while to enjoy the dramatic presentations coming out from television

screens in the different stalls” (Okome, 2007, p.12). The audience, here, have no influences on the choice of films screened. Yet, the stall proprietors are not unaware of the prospects in screening the latest releases. They also employ suspense as they change the films at the peak of actions thereby forcing the people to decide to own such a film personally. This enhances sales. Okome (2007, p. 18) summarizes these points saying:

...members are not charged any fees to see a video film and they do not have any influence over what is screened either. What is projected at any time is entirely left to the proprietor of the video stall. As venues for screening the latest video releases, proprietors know all too well the advantages of positioning television screens to face the streets. This positioning is also an advertisement strategy. It is a way of announcing the availability of new releases. Conditioned by the exigencies of the street, members may respond to this videoed world in a way that can spring cultural and political surprises.

The street video stalls are also sources of noise pollution. They do not need to be quiet, and hardly do they keep quiet as this can amount to inactivity in the stalls. They are overtly loud and most people seem not to care. The use of posters as in the case of the film market stalls is equally rampant.

In the second variant of the street video film stalls, part of shops already in use for other forms of business are used for film business. Hence, it is common sight to see film business combined with other business ventures such as barbing, hair dressing, supermarket, boutique and telecommunication businesses. In most of these cases, films are screened when there is public power supply or alternative power is supplied by the generator for the major business of the shop. Whatever shape they take, Onookome Okome is of the conclusion that:

The proliferation of video and music stalls is a prominent character of Nigerian cities and towns since the emergence of Nollywood. These stalls have since become part of the visual topography of these cities and towns. In profound ways, these stalls have remapped social spaces in these cities and towns. Although this re-mapping may indeed be temporary, while it lasts the spaces that these...inhabit are invested with cultural and political values, the kind which only the postcolonial condition can provoke. (2007, p. 7)

Okome goes further to refer to the video street stalls as “street corner theatres” (2007, p. 7) Membership of the street corner theatres are “fluid, very temporary and indeterminate. Members appeared and disappeared as if by magic” (Okome, 2007, p. 18). At times, the audience responds to the screened films in ways that give rise to socio-cultural, political and economic surprises.

Hawkers

Itinerant traders who are mobile in time and space help take the sale of Nollywood video films to even the remotest and uncommon parts of the country. In major motor parks in the cities, people hawking the films to commuters are regular sights. This is also the case in markets and along the major streets. Most of the hawkers are clever enough to have watched many of the films they hawk. They attempt retelling the stories of the films, most times grossly exaggerating the stories, in attempt to convince the people to buy. Verbal creativity and a sense of humor are assets to video film hawkers in Nigeria. It must also be pointed out

that hawking is an avenue for the disposition of pirated works in the country. There are also some variant in the film hawking business.

Some hawkers arrange their wares in wheel barrows which they push around, stopping briefly at strategic and crowded places to attempt making sales. Some other hawkers carry their wares in cartoons and bags popularly referred to as “Ghana Must Go Bags.” On the outside part of the cartoons, the films are carefully and aesthetically stacked, most times using elastic threads and bands. There are also the found space hawkers who convert any available space(s) into an ad hoc selling ground on some agreement with owners or perceived owners of such spaces. A close observation reveals that many film hawkers skip intervals of days or even weeks before returning to parks and such other places where they sold their wares. The logic behind this is not farfetched – the avoidance of the return of bad copies bought from them, and a possible confrontation. The use of trucks to hawk films is also a common sight in Nigerian cities, semi-urban and rural areas. The truck hawkers make provisions to accommodate a television monitor, a DVD player and loud speaker(s) in the truck. Car batteries, sometimes serve as alternative energy source to power the television monitor and DVD player. The disadvantage here is that the hawker may run into difficulty when the battery discharges. Hence, many make provision for spare charged batteries. Alternatively, small generating sets are used as power supply sources. Such generating sets have the advantages of being less noisy, having moderate fuel consumption rate, being portable and affordable. In recent times, the power situation in Nigeria has made this type of generating set a common household property. It has come to be derogatively referred to as “I better pass my neighbor.” Hawkers who use trucks for the hawking of films screen the films as they move about. A movie theatre is formed at any point where such a hawker stops to make sales. The noise issuing from the television set connected to loud speakers provide more than enough publicity. The usual audience for this category of hawkers comprises more of artisans, women, young girls and the children. The customers have the advantage of having the films screen tested at the point of purchase. Hence, many hawkers in this category endeavour not to sell bad copies. This does not in any way rule out the sale of pirated copies by these hawkers. In fact, some customers prefer to buy the particular copy of the film playing on the hawker’s monitor on the strength that the hawkers play original copies but offer the pirated copies to the public. There is some sense of reality in this reasoning. The hawkers need not to be told that the screening of bad copies will produce poor audio and picture qualities and cracking effects. These will definitely affect sales.

Another trend in film hawking common in Nigerian urban and semi-urban cities is the use of floats. Here, a film merchant makes use of a moving van or bus to sale the films. Television monitor, DVD player, loud speakers and alternative source(s) of power are also all accommodated inside such a van or bus. The floats cover appreciable distances skipping areas not densely populated. As the bus or van moves slowly along the major roads and/or streets of the city, the team of the float offers copies of the films to passers-by who indicate interest to buy. The team members are paid on the basis of some commission on each copy sold.

Video Rentals

There are also those who run video rental shops renting out video films to customers to watch and return. It should be pointed out here that many of the film rental outlets in Nigeria are not register, do not belong to any of the two registered associations for film rental business in Nigeria- Video Rental Operators Owners Association of Nigeria (VROAN) and Video Clubs Owners Associate of Nigeria (VCOAN). They also do not adhere to the statues regulating film rental business in the country.

The Copyright Video Rental and the Copyright Security Devices Regulations is a cushion to the Commission's enforcement drive. The Regulations introduced to sanitize the activities in the film and music sub-sectors primarily for the benefits of film producers, artistes, musicians and investors to usher in an authorized rental copy for use by video rental operators in the film sub-sector and a security device affixed to genuine works (hologram) in the music sub-sector. (Adelowo *et al*, n.d., p. 6)

Unapproved renting out of films to the public is tantamount to piracy.

Pirates

Ewulukwa (2004, p. 377) sees piracy as "illegal reprinting or reproduction of the works of another which is the subject of copyright." One who indulges in this act is a pirate. The irony of this situation is that piracy is in a way becoming an acceptable anomaly in the Nigerian society. The pirates in Nollywood are so viciousness in the manner with which they have damned all consequences to operate with comfort and ease, not minding the statutes of the land and the regulatory agencies. As soon as a film is released in Nollywood, it takes only a couple of days for pirates to rip it off. Worthy of note is the fact that new digital technologies that facilitate mass production are making the global film industry generally, and Nollywood in particular, more vulnerable to the activities of pirates. This is so much so because the facilities that can be used to illegally copy and mass produce films are easy to acquire in terms of both finance and convenience. To meaningfully discuss the issue of piracy in Nollywood, certain other issues such as poverty, corruption, and the culture of borrowing or hiring need to be addressed. The point has to be made that without the patronage of the audience, pirates will not sell their wares, hence there is need to fight piracy from the audience angle. There are in existence people who believe that not all the activities of pirates are bad. They argue that there are traces of positivity to piracy. In a work entitled "Innovative Imitation" Theodore Levitte argues that "*a strategy of product imitation might be as profitable as a strategy of product innovation*" (original emphasis) (cited in Kotler, 2003, p. 269). Whatever reactions and justifications being ascribed to piracy, particularly in Nollywood, the industry can do better without. Rather than hurt the industry, an end to piracy will be a huge blessing to the industry.

Summary

An EP marketer procures a script. This most times is based on the reigning storyline or genre. The marketer goes ahead to hire a director and, to a large extent, other crew members. In many cases also, they take charge of a greater part of the casting. Stars of the industry, celebrities in other fields, and stars of other nationals are usually used as selling faces for the films, harping on their fan base. New and/or unknown actors are then injected in the production, firstly to save cost, and secondly to try to promote them. This group of actors is more often than not drawn from among the friends and relatives of the marketer. Victor Akande refers to this as "couch casting, whereby their family members and in most cases lovers take up lead roles. This, in most cases, involves people who are bereft of any talent" (2010, p. 3). The marketer also considers the language that will enhance the marketability of the film and the marketing approach to adopt. He also considers how to break the film into sequel parts. The films are usually shot on meager budgets and within a short time frame. Found spaces are used as locations. The postproduction is done using simple computer software. The edited version is then sent to the companies that mass produce them. The finished film is delivered in cartons. A single carton contains 1, 000 VCDs packed in 10 rolls

of 100 CDs each. The film jackets and posters are also printed. The posters are usually aggressively pasted a reasonable time before the release of the film. If the filmmaker is not a registered marketer, his film is released into the market through a registered member who presents him in the market. The logic is that if there are issues of censorship or the likes with the film, the presenter is held responsible for the person he introduced. Hence, it is common sight in the industry to see posters bearing inscriptions such as “ABC PRODUCTIONS LIMITED PRESENTS XYZ MOVIES” where ABC Productions Limited is a registered marketer and the presenter, and XYZ MOVIES an aspiring or non-registered marketer being presented. In such posters, colour contrasts, font, and layout to distinguish the presenter from the presented for aesthetic and particularly semiotic purposes. There exist distributors who buy the films from the marketer in bulk at a slightly lower price and then sell to retailers or directly to consumers. As earlier said, the marketers themselves are also distributors, helping to distribute the films of their colleagues as part of the marketing strategy. There are also retailers who get their stock from either the marketers or the distributors. The retailers sell in the market stalls, the street video stalls, through hawking or the use of floats. There are also those who run video rental shops, renting out video films to customers to watch and return. Also in existence are the pirates who make their own money by illegally mass producing and selling other people’s films.

The marketers dictate the pace of activities in the industry. Unfortunately, they have not understood or explored the multiple streams that boost the entertainment industry. All they think of is how to squeeze out the expected maximum returns from the films made with minimal resources, mainly of time and money, and marketed as merchantable goods over the counter. Ayakoroma likens this to what Ola Rotimi refers to as the “instanmatic” and “Polaroid” nature of Nigerians – “we are more interested in instant returns and miracles not prospects or promises.” (2008, p. 6) To Ihentuge (2013, p. 19),

The implication is that commercial considerations lord it over artistic excellence in Nollywood films as quality is sacrificed for quantity. This accounts for the intimidating number of people already in the industry and the crowd still striving to join at all cost.

This is somehow tied to wrong value systems in contemporary society. The multiple logics of synergy are not been tapped into.

Conclusion

In many aspects of Nollywood, the entrance of trained personnel is being witnessed. Such areas include, but not limited to, script writing, directing, acting, cinematography, editing, costume and make up. Unfortunately, the presence of trained personnel is still lacking in the area of marketing/distribution which incidentally is the hub of the industry. Those hitherto manning this area of the industry are non-professionals who stumbled on the business opportunity as pioneers of the industry. They have done well to sustain the industry this far. The Theatre and Film Studies Departments should start cross disciplinary training especially in areas like film marketing right from the undergraduate level to aid aspiring film entrepreneurs in the country. Such training must involve the Department of Marketing and/or Economics to be relevant and functional. In the long run, there is every need for trained hands to handle Nollywood marketing to find a long term solution to the continued revenue losses due to informal marketing and sales practices that breed film piracy and weaken the

confidence of potential investors. Until this is achieved, the industry's hope to progress beyond its present state will not be in sight.

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