Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS), Vol.6 No.4 December, 2023; p.g. 397 – 405; ISSN: 2695-2319 (Print); ISSN: 2695-2327 (Online)

X-RAYING THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MOVIE OUTCOMES IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN CINEMA

IBE OGBOBUIKE IBE (PhD)
Department of Theatre and Film Studies
Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria
ibe.ibe@ust.edu.ng

Abstract

This study examines the current factors shaping the commercial nature of the Nigerian movie industry (Nollywood), with the aim of examining the influence of social media on the outcome of movies. Itdelves into the use of social media in the shaping, interrogating, marketing and distribution of Nollywood films, and examines the implications of social media usage in overcoming challenges related to the production, marketing and distribution of contemporary Nollywood movies. Anchored on Everett Roger's diffusion of innovation theory, the study explores the potential of social media in today's media convergence to influence the outcome of Nollywood movies. The study employs the descriptive research design and utilizes the survey research method in a mixed qualitative and quantitative approach. And it is found that distinctively, social media usage has signalled a paradigm shift in the way and manner in which movies are produced, marketed and distributed. Widespread advertisement and mentions, instantaneous feedback, and easy determination of spread through likes, posts and mentions are its major comparative advantages over traditional marketing methods. Also, it is found that there is a link between social media metrics such as likes, comments, mentions etc. and the popularity of contemporary Nollywood movies; which in turn influences box office returns. Thus, the study argues that social media engagement greatly influences movie outcomes in terms of production and distribution dynamics. Finally, the study recommends the deployment of proper social media engagement strategies by Nollywood filmmakers to elevate the profile of their films and increase their chances of box office success.

Keywords: Nollywood, Social Media, Distribution, Movie Outcomes.

Introduction

The influence of social media on movie outcomes in contemporary Nigerian cinema is a vibrant and complex occurrence that interconnects various grounds which do not only include arts and media studies but also marketing, communication, sociology, and cultural studies etc. Scholars and industry experts alike are gradually identifying the need to understand the complex relationships between social media engagement and the performance of movies at the box office, as well as their lasting impression on popular culture. This study holds significant implications for both the Nigerian movie industry and the broader global film landscape as understanding the interplay between social media and movie outcomes can guide filmmakers in developing more effective promotional and marketing strategies. This research will guide marketers and distributors to further understand the boundaries of their market space and adjust their approaches accordingly.

In addition, insights gained from this research can inform Nollywood stakeholders about audience preferences, helping them create contents that resonate with viewers. Social media influencers would learn how to refocus their outputs towards correctly occupying their followers with impactful engagement towards a holistic, mutually beneficial movie experience for both the filmmaker and the audiences. According to Emilia Burbano:

> Social media has revolutionized our marketing channels and reach with the main objective and benefit of building communities to spark conversation. As with any other industry, the film industry has also been positively impacted by social media. We have seen as most movie producers have embraced it as a great tool to attract audiences and fans around them maximizing all marketing efforts and generating a two-way conversation and connection that seemed unimaginable 20 years ago. Today, with the help of social media, entertainment and film have become a pop culture phenomenon that has awakened fascination and interest in people around the world, generating prolonged engagement before, during and after movies have been released (As cited in Encalada, 2019).

This is why the industry must engage the social media before, during, and after a film's release. Social media provides the film business with an engaging experience with its clients, forging direct relationships between them and their prospective viewers. Furthermore, cinema brands acquire reliable data, so they only need to be innovative with social media ads and clients would fall in love instantaneously. By investigating the role of social media in shaping Nollywood film success; this research contributes to the ongoing discourse surrounding digital media's impact on the entertainment industry. Media scholars, as well as those interested in understanding how Nollywood works, will find this research a useful tool for unravelling the complex interplay between social media and Nollywood industry players vis-a-vis their products.

Major questions persist regarding the specific strategies that drive engagement, the types of content that resonate most with audiences, and the challenges and ethical considerations that arise when leveraging social media for movie promotion. This study seeks to fill these gaps by investigating the influence of social media on Nollywood movie outcomes. By analyzing the relationship between social media engagement, audience perceptions, and box office performance, this research aims to provide perceptions that can enhance the practices of filmmakers, marketing professionals, and industry stakeholders.

Research Methodology

This study adopts the descriptive research design in a mixed method approach of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The study recognizes that though there may exist a difference in the social media campaign approaches for Nollywood movies, there has been a noticeable consistency in the pattern of contemporary releases, therefore the central ideas around publicity may tend to have substantial similarities and so the expected results may not differ significantly. The qualitative technique is used in the interrogation of the artistic structures of Nollywood while the quantitative technique is used to analyze the influence of social media on the outcome of movies.

Theoretical Framework

By applying theory to the study, we can gain a deeper understanding of how social media is integrated into the Nigerian cinema, influencing both filmmakers' strategies and audience behaviours. The Diffusion of Innovations Theory is used in this study because it is a social theory that describes how new ideas, technologies, goods, or innovations spread within a social system through time. The diffusion of innovation (DOI) idea, proposed by Everett M. Rogers in 1962, is one of the oldest social science theories; the method through which an invention is conveyed to members of a social system over time via certain channels. An innovation relative's concept, behaviour, or item experienced by a person or other unit of adoption (Rogers, 1983, p. 21). "The innovation and diffusion theory is a very well established theory both in academics as well as in practice" (Wani & Ali, 2015, p. 99).

The diffusion of innovation theory looks into how social members adopt 1,700 likes' ideas and how they make decision towards it. Both mass media and interpersonal communication channel is involved in the diffusion process. The theory heavily relies on engagements. According to the theory, innovations should be widely adopted to attain development and sustainability. In real-life situations, the adaptability of the culture plays a very relevant role wherever the theory is applied. Rogers proposed four elements of diffusion of innovations they are: Innovation, Channel, Social System, and Time (Kennison, 2022, p. 43).

Innovations are anything that a person perceives as novel, such as ideas, practices, or products. It could also be a drive to try something new or effect societal change. The communication channels are used to transfer messages from one person to another. Communication is the primary means by which innovations spread among individuals (Sahin, 2006). It can come in many different forms, such as word-of-mouth, SMS, various literary forms, etc. Time - This term describes how long it takes for a society's citizens to accept new developments. It is the amount of time individuals need to adjust to new concepts. As an illustration, think of how long it took for consumers to adopt mobile phones once they were first brought to the market. Social System – Interrelated network groups joined together to solve the problems for a common goal. The social system refers to all kinds of components which construct the society like religion, institutions, groups of people etc (Kennison, 2022, p. 22).

This theory provides insights into the adoption and acceptance of innovations such as social media by individuals and groups. As social media evolves, so will its adoption by diverse users. This study seeks to x-ray the Nigerian film industry and how it has navigated the diffusion of the innovation of social media into the strategies of marketing their products. The theory outlines different stages and factors that influence the rate of adoption of innovations. Everett M. Rogers describes innovation diffusion theory with the proposition of five steps that humans go through while adopting an invention:

a. Awareness and knowledge of the existence of the invention.
b. Persuasion: Developing a favourable attitude about the invention and requesting further information.
c. Decision: Deciding to embrace or reject the invention.
d. Implementation: Applying the invention to a specific environment or scenario.
b. Confirmation: Reinforcement of the choice to continue employing the invention.

Types of Adopters:

Rogers categorized individuals into different adopter categories based on their timing of adoption:

a. Innovators: The first to accept frequently risk-takers and supporters of new ideas.
b. Early Adopters: Opinion leaders who adopt ideas after the innovators and serve as role models for others. This underscores the potential of the Nollywood audience to segment into these categories. The early adopters help spread the information about movies to the laggards who eventually begin to see and understand the relevance of the social media engagements in the choice of movies to watch as well as interaction with other areas of the movie production.
c. Early Majority: Pragmatic individuals who accept technologies after the early adopters but before the majority.
d. Skeptical persons who accept ideas only after they have become mainstream.
e. Laggards: Individuals who are the last to adopt and may only do so out of necessity.

Relative Advantage: Innovations that are perceived to offer clear advantages over existing solutions are more likely to be adopted. These advantages can be economic, functional, or psychological.

a. Compatibility: Innovations that align with an individual or organization's values, needs, and experiences are more likely to be adopted.
b. Complexity: Innovations that are easy to understand and use are more likely to be adopted than those perceived as complex.
c. Trialability: The degree to which an innovation can be experimented with on a limited basis influences its adoption. People are more likely to adopt innovations they can try before committing fully.
d. Observability: The extent to which the outcomes of an innovation are visible to others affects its adoption. Innovations with easily observable benefits are more likely to be adopted.

This study relies on the diffusion of innovation theory to emphasize the point that new technology such as social media has an impact on cultural products such as films and can significantly influence the outcome of movies that engage them for marketing and publicity. The diffusion of innovations theory describes how new ideas, behaviours, technologies, or goods spread through a population gradually, rather than all at once. Adoption starts with innovators and early adopters and then spreads through the population to the early majority and late majority.

The Influence of Social Media on Movie Outcomes in Contemporary Nigerian Cinema

Social media has become an integral part of people's daily life, as such, individuals and organizations are actively involved in the search for ways through which they can be engaged to better their professional and personal lives. Companies around the world are harnessing these effective marketing platforms to build the profile of their brands, gain visibility and attract their desired kind of connections and patronage. Social media such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, SnapChat, X or LinkedIn are appropriate channels to create brand awareness and build authority. They can be used to educate customers, promote products and services, and extend communication and interaction with target audiences and customers. Individuals are also sourcing for avenues to create linkages with the brands that

most satisfy their needs and connect with them on a more personalized level in other to help them get the best out of these brands.

Today, social media has been accepted as an inescapable energy in our daily lives such that it controls how we create and consume information. Social media communication has also impacted how we think about the world, how we speak, how we dress, and the contents and contexts of our inner thoughts; it has become our contemporary global playground. Many years ago, Marshall McLuhan (1962) postulated that the world would become one in a borderless, multidimensional flow of information and form a global village. And also, that the content of human expression will be largely dictated by technology through technological determinism theory. It is safe to say that his postulations were accurate as this is now the reality of modern man.

Many businesses depend on social media marketing. Social media marketing has been widely used in the context of integrated marketing communications through social networking. Such marketing is considered to be discrete and differs from its long-standing existence in the field of sociology. The term 'social network' is a subset of online communities, platforms, or group pages where users interact and share their ideas and choices with others. Marketing permeates through the divergent social networks available on social media. Popular culture, group mentality, peer pressure as well as diffusion of trends all may stem from the use of social media within a network. The younger generation relies on the popular trends of the day to determine their use of language, slang, dressing, dances etc. This is powered by the proliferation of media convergence.

The entertainment world has perhaps been the biggest beneficiary of this media convergence. And, media convergence in itself does not necessarily mean many media coming together but more often than not, refers to the fluidity of the exchange of data between diverse platforms, devices and formats. Also, the instantaneous feedback enabled by the internet is now readily available on mobile devices. Specifically, the movie industry has had changes in the way its products are made and marketed. Social media can be used in a variety of ways to impact the outcome of a movie.

The most noticeable use revolves around the creation of buzz and excitement around the movie thereby engaging the potential audiences and creating anticipation. Social media can be used to reach a wider audience than traditional marketing methods. Moviemakers may post behind-the-scenes footage, trailers and other content on social media as a means of connecting fans with their cast and crew. This trend can create a sense of loyalty and inclusiveness amongst the audience. New audiences can therefore be reached across borders. This hype can also form part of the criteria to judge how well the movie would fare upon release. Low-budget movies with limited funds for large advertising campaigns can rely on social media for marketing through the release of trailers and other promotional materials to generate anticipation about the movie.

Before the advent of social media, movies were primarily marketed through traditional means, such as print ads, television commercials, radio spots etc. However, this process was more one-way, with the studio pushing out information, and fans passively receiving it. Now, the relationship between movie studios and fans has become two-way and highly interactive.

Fans can now share their thoughts and opinions about a movie and studios can directly engage with them.

However, beyond that, the use of social media for movies can be employed to directly influence the content of the movies. If a movie gets a lot of negative feedback on social media, the producer and director could decide to change the ending or make some changes to appease the audience. Social media can shape movie production in diverse ways. For example, it can influence the type of movies made. A particular genre may be trending on social media, prompting the studios to deceive by making movies that join the trend. The studios could target a specific type of audience and create unique marketing campaigns that do not require much funds. Social media also influences the choice of films to watch. Several factors may influence the choice of a film. Consumers therefore take certain things into account before selecting a film: (1) its marketing communication; (2) its unbiased source of information; (3) the features of the film; (4) its content; and (5) easy access (Umukoro, 2020, p. 278).

In recent years, Nollywood has increasingly made use of social media for its movies. This is especially true with movies that are targeted at younger audiences. The cast and crew actively now engage the audience answering questions about the movie(s). But there is an explosive volume of content on social media and its influence continues to increase. There is also a complex and dynamic relationship on social media which could be created as an alternative to word-of-mouth content. Apart from social media presenting a storage and retrieval means, Nollywood principal actors can leverage the pervasiveness to carve a unique niche for themselves. This will serve to distinguish their content and engagement from the millions of contents their potential audiences encounter daily. When user-generated social media content is captured, analysed and interpreted, it could lead to better management of the production of new movies.

The Nigerian movie industry, popularly referred to as Nollywood, has witnessed significant growth over the years, growing from low-budget productions to becoming the second-largest film industry in the world in terms of output. This growth has been driven by advancements in technology, the emergence of digital distribution platforms, and a fast-changing media landscape. Traditional marketing methods that depend on print advertisements, television commercials, trailers, physical copies and local cinema screenings have been dwarfed – and in some cases, eclipsed by the rapid increase of social media platforms. These traditional marketing methods are not necessarily useless in today's world, and are still deployed where feasible.

The idea is to recognize that social media has ushered in a new era of engagement, allowing filmmakers to directly interrelate with audiences, generate conversations, and nurture dedicated fan communities. The idea for Nollywood to position itself in a vantage point in the digital marketing sphere through the easy accessibility of these social media platforms, coupled with the widespread adoption of smartphones and affordable internet has made this shift result in the encouragement of filmmakers and studios to harness the potential of social media to produce pre-release excitement, manage audience expectations, and also sustain post-release engagement.

As the digital era continues to redefine Nollywood, it becomes important to know the role that social media plays in shaping movie outcomes. Questions arise about the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies, the impact of online discussions and reviews on box office performance, and the extent to which audience engagement on these platforms influences filmmakers' production decisions. Therefore, when investigating how the use of social media affects movie outcomes, it is pertinent to consider a wide range of areas that cover different dimensions of this relationship. By exploring these and other related areas, filmmakers can gain a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted ways in which social media intersects with movie outcomes.

Audience engagement and reach are probably the most important aspects to consider, i.e. how does the level of audience engagement on social media correlate with the movie's box office performance? And does higher engagement on social media platforms necessarily lead to increased ticket sales and audience turnout? When managing pre-release buzz and hype, it is important to look into what strategies effectively create and sustain hype leading up to a film's release. What measurements and social media metrics (likes, shares, mentions, re-tweets) provide the most accurate insights into social media correlation to movie performance? Could user-generated content shared make or mar the films?

Issues around influencer impact and how social media affect the narrative and audiences' expectation in the long term should be considered. To be considered too is how the real-time feedback loop on social media may influence the creative decisions made by filmmakers. Can excessive reliance on audience feedback compromise a movie's artistic integrity? Do digitally literate audiences have different expectations and responses compared to less digitally literate ones? How important is it to control the narratives leading to the release of the movie to prevent negative stories from spreading about the film? These are the different dimensions that social media could influence the outcome of movies.

Imperatives of Social Media in Nollywood

There is a constellation of imperatives regarding the usage of social media in Nollywood which are invariably attached to its deployment on several levels and for diverse purposes. For example, social media creates a wider reach for the movies through platforms such as Instagram, X, Facebook, TikTok, Snapchat, etc, and this allows Nollywood filmmakers to reach a global audience; breaking down geographical barriers and expanding their market reach. According to Odunlami; "social media marketing is trending in all business endeavour and film production and marketing has been made easy as the internet facilitates quick distribution and consumption of cultural products (movies)" (2022, p. 678). Social media allows for cost-effective advertising, real-time updates, audience engagement and feedback, direct contact, content distribution, online streaming, short-form content, niche targeting, trend involvement, fan culture, and fandom. These are some ways social media has been used to influence movie outcomes.

The works of Nollywood producers, directors and actors would fade fast into obscurity if the proper avenues for engagement and wider reach are not explored. The value of a work of art is almost exclusively tied to its consumption and appreciation of it. Cultural products like movies and theatrical productions need publicity as the number of patrons will depend on the number of interested people who are interested in the production. This is why social

media platforms are imperative in the propagation of these products. This further explains why social media has become an indispensable tool for Nollywood, impacting how films are promoted, distributed, and engaged. It has democratized the filmmaking process, allowing filmmakers to connect directly with their audience and harness the power of online communities to amplify the reach and impact of their work. This, however, is subject to a proper deployment of its competencies.

Implications of the Application of Social Media in Nollywood

Social media has far-reaching ramifications and uses in Nollywood, transforming numerous sectors of the Nigerian film business. Social media offers the opportunity for global reach and borderless visibility. Because of the extensive availability of social media platforms, Nollywood films may now reach a worldwide audience. Filmmakers may advertise their films to worldwide viewers, allowing them to expand their business beyond Nigeria and the African continent. Africans in the diaspora now love Nollywood products. However, much like Bollywood and Chinese films, inhabitants of different countries and regions are beginning to watch Nollywood films across several continents (Madichie, 2019, p. 94).

Direct audience engagement implies that social media provides direct contact between Nollywood filmmakers, actors, and their audiences. Filmmakers may participate in discussions, reply to comments, and learn about audience preferences, establishing a sense of community and engagement. Social media allows for unique, innovative and targeted marketing efforts that may build hype before the premiere of a film. Filmmakers can use teaser trailers, behind-the-scenes content, and interactive challenges to build anticipation and engagement. Data-driven insights provide valuable data and analytics on audience behaviour and engagement. Filmmakers can analyze data to tailor marketing strategies, refine content, and make informed decisions about future projects.

Filmmakers may assess audience reactions to trailers, posters, and other promotional materials and make changes as needed. Promotion of niche content enabled by social media groups may help niche genres or subjects in Nollywood gain loyal consumers. Filmmakers may target certain interest groups, ensuring that their material reaches the most relevant audience. Producers might try influencer partnerships on social media, which can have a big impact on audience impressions and their consumption decisions. Filmmakers can work with influencers whose ideas fit with their film's themes to reach a larger and more engaged audience.

Producers and filmmakers in Nollywood can engage in trans-media storytelling using social media, allowing for the extension of a film's world. Social media may be used by filmmakers to distribute supplemental information, interactive experiences, and side tales that improve the overall movie experience. Filmmakers may create a video that generates debate on critical issues, harnessing social media's virality and reach to effect change. Film Festivals and Releases on the internet could entail virtual film festivals and online premieres can be held on social media. Filmmakers can use social media sites to debut their films, reaching people directly and perhaps circumventing established distribution routes.

Conclusion

In essence, the integration of social media in Nollywood has far-reaching capabilities of reshaping the industry's dynamics, offering new avenues for creativity, engagement, and collaboration. It empowers filmmakers to connect with their audience on a deeper level and adapt to the ever-evolving digital landscape. The film industry is profit-orientated like every other industry therefore, the profit and loss that applies to all profit-oriented industries applies also to the Nollywood industry. This is why the use of social media which offers cheap publicity of their products through engagement is imperative.

References

Encalada, D. (2019). The impact of social media marketing on the film industry. Retrieved from https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/impact-social-media-marketing-film-industry-daniela-encalada/

Kennison, G. (2022). Communication theories for today's application. *Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 12(4), 39-47.

Madichie, N. (Ed.), Ajakaiya, B. O., &Ratten, V. (2019). The impact of new media (digital) and globalization on Nollywood. In Taura, N., Bolat, E., &Madichie, N. (Eds.) *Digital entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa* (pp. 89-121). Palgrave Macmillan.

McLuhan, M. (1962). *The Gutenberg galaxy: The making of the typographic man.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Odunlami, O. A. (2022). Social media use and the promotion of Nollywood movies' trailers among Nigerian youths. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science,*6(10), 673-679.

Rogers, E. M. (1976). New product adoption and diffusion. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 2 (3), 290 -301.

Rogers E. M. (1983). *Diffusion of innovations*. 3rd Ed. Macmillan Publishing Co.

Sahin, I. (2006). Detailed review of Rogers' diffusion of innovations theory and educational technology-related studies based on Rogers' theory. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology,*5(2), 14-23.

Umukoro, O. E. (2020). Nollywood accounting and financial performance: Evidence from Nigerian Cinemas. *International Journal of Financial Research*, 11(2), 271-280. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.5430/ijfr.v11n2p271

Wani, T. A., & Ali, S. W. (2015). Innovation diffusion theory: Review and scope in the study of adoption of smartphones in India. *Journal of General Management Research,* 2(2), 98-115.