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A stylized illustration of a tropical beach scene. Two palm trees stand on a dark, rocky shore. In the background, a small building with a thatched roof is visible. The water is depicted with light, wavy lines, suggesting gentle waves. The entire scene is rendered in a monochromatic green and white color scheme.

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NIGERIAN FILMS AND THE AFRICAN CULTURAL VALUE: AN EXAMINATION OF PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION OF ROMANTIC SCENES IN NIGERIAN MOVIES.

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ABSTRACT

In recent times the movies produced by Nigerians seem to deviate from the true cultural values of the people. They tend to portray immorality rather than moral uprightness for which African peoples are known. Thus, some scenes in a number of Nigerian films are obscene - e.g. girls/women wore dresses which exposed their bodies especially the thighs and breasts; there are cases of kissing and romancing in some films. The study therefore, examines people's perception of the obscene scenes in Nigeria movies. It was conducted among the residents of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. Both the interview and questionnaire methods were used in the data collection. The study reveals that a clear majority of the people denounced immoral scenes in Nigerian films. Finally it was suggested that stiff censorship actions should be taken to discourage Nigerian film producers from producing such films.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a country made up of many ethnic groups with distinct cultural practices that make each of them different and unique. That notwithstanding, there are some cultural traits that are common to all the ethnic groups. These include modesty in speech, dressing, and discretion in actions, especially as it pertains to sexual behaviour.

The Nigerian movie industry has evolved from programmes broadcast on both the radio and television, which are parts of what make up the mass media, whose functions are to inform, educate and entertain the people. Ideally these should be done in the context of the culture of the people among whom a particular medium finds itself. In this regard therefore, the Nigerian movie industry should inform, educate, and entertain the people in the ways that will help to portray and promote the cultural heritage of the peoples of Nigeria.

Most recent Nigerian movies (films) tend to portray the Western rather than African cultural norms. It is sad to note that only very few Nigerian movies showcase the Nigerian cultural heritage. Most of the movies only made a critique of one or more aspects of Nigerian cultures. They present the negative aspects of the ways of life of ethnic or cultural groups in Nigeria. In this regard therefore, the Nigerian cultures are being presented to the world in bad light.

Most scenes presented in today's movies are obscene. Discretion in terms of sexual behaviour or morality as a whole seems to have vanished from the artistes' worldwide. This is a clear deviation from the age long cultural values of Nigerian peoples.

The study therefore, examines the extent to which the Nigerian movies portray the African cultures. Specifically the study seeks to:

- (i) Know whether Nigerian cultures are portrayed positively or negatively by the movies.
- (ii) Know the Nigerian people's view of the contents of some of the movies.

The study focuses mainly on how the residents of Uyo Metropolis (a typical Nigerian city) perceive the Nigerian movies industry in terms of the extent to which it showcases the Nigerian cultural heritage. The simple random sampling method was used in selecting respondents. Data was collected using both the questionnaire and interview methods. The age limit for the respondents was 18 years i.e. respondents were 18 years and above. Uyo, the study area is the capital of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The content of Nigerian home movies is important, and seen so by many people. Thus, a good number of people have made notable comments about it. We shall now examine some of these comments and the related literature. Lansfield, (in Newswatch Magazine of April 12, 2004) states: "African films should stop imitating Hollywood because, the strongest point is to give African audience the local stories, they need". Here he stresses the point that Nigerians (Africans) need to watch films that have Nigerian cultural contents and not what is created with Western cultural contents. Ukudulo, (In Daily Independent of Thursday, May 6, 2004) States: "I would rather prefer a situation where filmmakers would use their works to portray the positive aspects of Nigeria's rich cultural heritage"

On his part Njemanze (In Punch of Saturday, July 31, 2004) states: "If I'm getting nude in a movie because I'm insane or a bit paranoid, I don't mind that, for the right price, of course. But if it has to

do with sex, I may object to it..." The above shows that nudity in movies, negate the African cultural norm and that artistes know this but the lure of the financial gains drives them to such excesses.

Odumosu (In, New Age Newspaper of Friday, August 13, 2004) observes: "Most Nigerian films lack in-depth African cultural reality. They just showcase aesthetics and cosmetic life, that is all." This assertion suggests that Nigerian films do not portray or promote African culture.

Speaking on the need for Nigerian movies to promote African culture by showing scenes that are acceptable within our cultural milieu, Akindele (In, New Age Newspaper of Friday, August 13, 2004) notes: "I believe that Arts, History and culture make people and life. The culture is embedded in History " . . .It is about values and culture and as an African, I will project those values," He believes that Nigerians should project the Nigerian cultural heritage.

Speaking in support of the fact that Nigerian films are not really showing the African ways of life, Akanni (In, New Age Newspaper of Friday, August 27, 2004) says: "The under lying error of our current film making

efforts is the insistence to do it as they do abroad. Simply stated, film is primarily an artistic form of expression. It should be recognized and propagated as such. The manifestation and development of any art form depends on the peculiar, cultural, economic and political indices of the society producing it. Art - true art, is never international". This is a typical Nigerian's view of the movie industry as not promoting African cultural values.

Francis (In, Daily Independent Newspaper of Thursday, September 9, 2004) states: " would not mortgage the future of the Nigerian child by allowing films it considers injurious to their well being to be broadcast for monetary consideration. Nigerian youths are the future leaders of our nation and government would do everything to ensure that their future is secured. The films we produce in Nigeria should make our nation noble and not debase it. Nigerians value their culture... we are proud of these values and therefore, we will guard it jealously and defend it anywhere even in our movies." This view considers the effect of the anti African cultural value posture of Nigerian movies on the future of the Nigerian children.

Robson, (In, New Age Newspaper of Friday, September 10, 2004) posed the following question while reacting to whether or not the Nigerian films showcase scenes that do not promote our culture"... why make acting the spring board for materialism when we should be imparting knowledge to our viewers and celebrating our culture? What is acting without naturalness and beauty?". The above goes to confirm that real beauty of our movies lies not in the imported story lines but in the showing of African culture.

Kelani (In, New Age Newspaper of Friday, September 10, 2004) has this to say, " Someone who should be running a film board like ours should be someone who is knowledgeable enough in African culture way of life - roots, values, expressions etc. Ignorance of handling our culture is really alienating us". Kelani a film producer said this in reaffirming the fact that, Nigerian films should portray the African culture. He is of the view that Nigerian films should promote rather than destroy the African cultural values.

From the above review of relevant statements and/or literature it may be said that, most of the scenes in Nigerian movies, which are alien to Nigerian cultures are the consequence of the lust for material gains and greed among Nigerian artistes and film makers.

THEORETICAL PERSEPECTIVE

A theory, being a system of related ideas that enable one to explain and predict phenomena, is relevant to any research work. It helps to give the researcher a guide on he inclinations or perspectives to follow in the course of the research. In this work, the framework was derived from the Structuralism of the anthropologist Claude Levi-Straus, which says that the elements we see represent an inner structure of the mind.

Levi-strauss sees elements of all cultures as product of a single mental process that is common to humanity. Cultural elements, according to him, have a common inner structure that reflects the common structure of human thought, no matter how differently we view them. He claims that by observing the cultural manifestation of the human mind, you can infer crucial facts about the mind itself.

Structuralism theory is relevant to this work because of the emphasis on the inner structure of the mind, which is manifested in interaction. This can be used to explain the fact that, though acting in the nude in films or showing scenes of romance and kissing etc are alien to Nigerian cultural environment, it is the inner structure of the mind of the artistes that are represented in what we see.

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
10 - 20	36	18
21 - 30	20	10
31 - 40	84	42
41 - 50	16	8
51 - 60	24	12
60 and above	20	10
Total	200	100

Table 1 shows that the age category of 31 - 40 represented the highest number (or percentage) of respondents (42%) while the categories of 21 - 30 and 60 and above took the least number (or percentage) of respondents. (10% each)

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Respondent by Sex

Sex	No. Of Respondent	Percentage
Male	100	50
Female	100	50
Total	200	100

Table 2 shows that the respondents were in the proportion of 50% male and 50% female.

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education

Level of Education	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Below Primary	0	0
Primary	8	4
Secondary	68	34
Tertiary	124	62
Total	200	100

Respondents that have attained tertiary level of education made up the highest percentage (62%) followed by those of secondary level (34%). None of the respondents was below the primary level of education. There were only 4 respondents with primary level of education.

FINDINGS

As to whether acting half nude or acting with dresses which expose the female body promotes the African culture, ninety two percentage (92%) of the respondents said no while eight percent (8%) said yes (see table 4). This shows that, such scenes do not promote African culture.

Table 4: Responses on whether scenes of nudity promotes the African culture.

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
No	184	92
Yes	16	8
Total	200	100

Table 5: Responses on Whether Romancing and Kissing should be allowed in Nigerian Movies

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	34	17
No	166	83
Total	200	100

With regards to whether romance should be allowed in Nigeria movies, table five (5) shows that while seventeen percent (17%) support the inclusion of romance, eighty three percent (83%) denounced it by answering in the affirmative. It is obvious therefore, most Nigerians do not want romance and nudity to be part of the movies in Nigeria.

Below are specific comments made by some interviewees.

A 43 year old, male civil servant states: "Nigerian Artistes should consider our culture as their priority and government should look into the activities of the films industry and make sure that what they show is acceptable

within our cultural context". The statement suggests to the government the way forward. A 22 year old female student observes: "mouth kissing and deep romancing should be avoided and most importantly, the female should help the male by dressing modestly and simple...."

A 17 year old male undergraduate states: "Nigerian Artistes should stop borrowing from other cultures, the issue of going nude in films should be checked. They should also go back to the 1996-2001 movies which portrayed African cultures properly". A 35 year old male teacher notes: "The moves industry should be attached to the Ethical Reorientation Commission for proper articulation of the African cultures in the movies. Acting naked and wearing dresses which expose the body should be discontinued since they are not right in the context of our culture..."

A 25 year old female student observes: "they should keep up with good morals no matter the story line, nude scenes should be cut out" because so-called they do not have any place in our culture. Though the civilized countries are into it, we should make a difference and steer clear from such moral decadence. A 30 years old female trader.... notes: "using little boys who are not mature to romance big women who are old enough to be their mothers is a bad signal to the young people. All artistes should imbibe the culture of promoting our own heritage without imitating foreign immoral acts". A 28 year old female undergraduate states: "Nigerian films with romance scenes do not teach good morals to our youths and should be discontinued. Most of our movies teach the youth bad behaviour. . . .artistes go beyond the level of acting ordinary films to committing adultery".

Going by the above responses, it is quite obvious that respondents do not like watching nude or romantic scenes in movies. They believe that such scenes should not be included in the movies.

CONCLUSION

The fact that Nigerian movies promote alien cultures more than African culture cannot be over emphasized. To check this trend, the following recommendations are hereby made. The functions of the Censors Board

should be expanded to include editing or vetting of films before production.

Laws should be enacted and punitive measures stated for offenders. Government should issue punitive measures against those film producers who include immoral scenes in their movies. Government should ensure that films are properly scrutinized by appropriate agents before they are sold to the public.

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