

EMBEDDED MARKETING AND THE QUALITY-QUANTITY DICHOTOMY IN NOLLYWOOD



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Abstract

Filmmaking is a marriage of art and business. Hence, in successful and relevant films, art and business embrace each other for the consumer's delight. The Nigerian video film industry was born out of business necessities and not artistic concerns. Right from its inception, the industry is manned and driven by petty traders. The films are shot and produced on the video format with the most possible minimal budget and production time in order to minimize cost and maximize profit. Based on this, decisions are usually based on commercial considerations. Nollywood's world acclaim is based on quantity, and not quality, of films produced. Again, some Nollywood filmmakers make their monies by further tainting the image of the country by the pictures they paint of the country in their films. This paper discusses how embedded marketing can be harnessed to yield additional sources of funding to Nollywood filmmakers so that they can focus on quality in their productions and not cut corners to minimize production costs. It also x-rays how the sociological functions of Nollywood in image laundering can be engendered through embedded marketing. The work relies on data gathered through both primary and secondary research methods. Nollywood filmmakers, government and her agencies, public, private and multi-national companies, and institutions that offer products and services as well as international organisations that have stakes in Nigeria are encouraged to look towards embedded marketing in Nollywood. This has the potential of enhancing quality control in the industry and engendering its continued and better contributions to nation building.

Introduction

Nollywood, the Nigerian Video film industry, is rated very high among its contemporaries. This rating is only in terms of the quantity of films produced and not in quality. This owes much to the fact that the major patrons of the industry, the marketers, are petty traders and business men who aim at nothing short of return on investments and quick turnover. The films are produced with the most possible minimal resources, mainly money and time, and expected to maximize returns. 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” (6). 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.

In their misguided haste, the filmmakers overlook alternative sources of funding. One of such is the source of funding encapsulated in embedded marketing. Yet, they go about placing branded goods and services as well as the names and trademarks of companies and other institutions at very little or no cost. The potentials of embedded marketing are not being tapped in the industry.

Again, it is a foregone conclusion that the image of Nigeria has been battered for quite some time in the eyes of the international community. The country is bedeviled with leadership failures which have engendered various shades of decay and underdevelopment. The value system has been ebbing by the day. Ayakoroma (23) puts this clearer as he notes thus:

Honestly, integrity, sense of national identity, love for ones neighbour, sanctity of human lives, morality and personal sacrifice, among other values, are like mere words in the ears of both the leaders and the citizenry.

Virtually all sectors of our national polity are affected by the rot. Such areas as education, power, security and policing, religion, civil and public services appear to be worst hit. The economy of the country has continued to decline over the years.

Consequently, the perception of Nigeria as a country and its people by the international community had become so worrisome thereby affecting its economy and foreign relations. Thus, sobriquets such as 419ners, drug couriers, smugglers, money launderers, human traffickers, sex hawkers, ritualists, and so on, have all been associated with Nigerians (Ayakoroma 23).

Film, like other art forms, is a reflection of the society that gave it birth. It is the mirror of the society from where it originates. Hence, there is no doubt that these societal ills in the country will always agitate the minds of her creative artists, the filmmaker inclusive. Yet, some form of caution must be applied.

Internally, most of the characters and incidents portrayed in many Nollywood films are but situation reports. These are not doing much in attempting to arrest the ills of the society. Constant showcasing of the ugly sides of the country is not actually doing us much good. The portrayal of the ills of the society could be seen as revolutionary consciousness and aesthetics. Though they can shock

the people into being aware of, and alert to, the realities of their environment, it is the view of Duruaku (88) that impressionable minds will look for loopholes in the crimes or ills shown so as to repeat the act with better precision and perhaps perfectly.

This view could be said to be true if we weigh it against the background of the view of Lowery and Defluer. In their attempt to explain the modeling theory – a theory which “came from psychology as an adaptation of the social learning theory” (Onabajo & Oladapo 122) – Lowery and Defluer posit that

Every individual receives a form of behaviour described or portrayed by a character in the media content, judges this behaviour to be attractive and potentially useful for coping with some personal situation that has arisen or might arise, and reproduces the portrayed behaviour in a relevant personal situation bringing satisfaction to the individual (25).

If the situation painted above is anything to go by, and if it is also true that the group with the highest tendency of being influenced by what they see, learn or find in their environment is the group made up of children and youths in the society which means that children’s and youths categories of the society are the most vulnerable to the rampaging effects of video and the film (Onabajo & Isiekwenagbu, 141), then one cannot help but wonder if Nollywood is not doing great disservice to the future of this country. Is the country not in for triple trouble in the nearest future as a result of what the children and the youths have imbibed from Nollywood already?

Similar to this is the fact that Nollywood has not been very fair in its portrayal of the image of Nigeria and Nigerians. Through movies, some other countries have created some forms of myths of themselves. This is not so in Nollywood where every societal ill is magnified out of proportion. This creates very bad image of the country. The filmmakers make their monies blundering the image of the country whereas the industry could be used for image laundering just as other sister film industries do. This could be achieved through embedded marketing.

Nollywood has made some positive contributions to the Nigerian nation. The Industry still has a lot more to contribute to the county. This work therefore aims at discussing ways of harnessing embedded marketing to benefit the industry and the nation at large. It should be rightly borne in mind that Nollywood is somewhat different from very many other film cultures especially the “first” world films. Nollywood thrives on an experimentally rudderless framework. It is a private sector driven initiative and its products are determined by their existence as marketable consumable goods in a capitalist economy. Those who man the industry are petty traders who found their way into the industry, and who are out only to maximize profit.

This work attempts a discussion of the concept of embedded marketing in the Nigerian video film industry, Nollywood. The aim is to discover how embedded marketing could be harnessed to form additional sources of funding for Nollywood filmmakers. This will reduce some financial stress on filmmakers so that they focus more on artistic excellence and the utilitarian essence of their films.

It is also the aim of this work to discuss ways the sociological functions of Nollywood can be further enhanced through embedded marketing. This will aid in laundering the

image of the country abroad and help in preaching the corporate messages of government and her agencies at home. Such issues as peace, security and value reorientation as well as such government policies like the re-branding campaign will benefit from this. As the government and/or her agencies provide funds for placements, they indirectly determine the content of such films. This will have significant impact in the restructuring of the industry. The work also aims at provoking further thoughts and studies in the arrear of placements as an integral part of the filmmaking business and how this can be applied in Nollywood.

Issues and Way Forward in Nollywood.

The Nigerian video film industry, Nollywood, has within its young age carved out a niche for itself in the global film market. The industry and the practitioners could be rightly said to belong to the school of thought that look at film as nothing short of a lucrative business venture out to maximize profit. The reason behind this is not farfetched- the industry evolved out of business and not artistic concerns. This becomes clearer if we accept the view that of all other experimentations with the video format, it was Kenneth Nnebue's 1992 production of the video film *Living in Bondage* that kick started the industry. That experiment was borne out of business and not artistic concerns- to give Nnebue's trade in blank videotapes imported from Taiwan a boost (*The Economist*, 2; Onookome, 4). This has necessitated all shades of problematic issues for the industry.

Several persons have at one time or the other discussed the problems bedeviling Nollywood. Like the proverbial ten blind men reviewing an elephant, these discussions allude to varying issues as the cause of the problems in the industry. They also come up with suggestions of how to better the industry. Virtually all such

studies are agreed on the fact that the commercial frame work of Nollywood is faulty and affects the quality and content of Nollywood films. They also agree that the situation is this way because the industry is private sector driven.

The virility of Nollywood depends largely on its private sector driven commercial structure. Yet it has almost become a cliché for critics of Nollywood to conclude every critical discourse on the industry with the suggestion that government should provide the financial elixir that will transform the industry overnight. This paper is skeptical in accepting this position in its totality because of the long term implications government's absolute involvement in Nollywood will have on the industry. Will such involvement not make the industry wear the looks of other public sector investments in Nigeria? NEPA or PHCN, NITEL, NIPOST, Nigerian Railway Cooperation and others are there as living witnesses. This work is of the view that government should, first and foremost, provide appropriate legislation and proper implementation of guiding rules for the industry. Secondly, this study advocates for some form of financial support for Nollywood. These could be achieved through **embedded marketing** that will provide additional funds for Nollywood and engender the sociological functions of the industry. A pause is apt will be apt here to consider a related concept – advertisement.

An Overview of Advertising

Advertising is as old as the human race. John Bitner defines advertising from the professional point of view as “any form of non personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services usually paid for by an identified sponsor” (369). This definition stresses three main issues namely:

1. Advertising is non personal – directed towards a large group of anonymous people.
2. Advertising is paid for and
3. Advertising has the sponsor(s) identified.

These three are usually the main focus of very many definitions of advertising by scholars and advertising experts. To Aliede (99), advertising is “a form of communication through the media about products, services, ideas, personalities or organizations, paid for by an identified sponsor.” He goes further to add that “it is a profession, a body of experts involved in the conceptualization, planning, creating, packaging and placing of adverts in the Media”. This definition sees advertising as a profession.

This work has good reasons to adopt the definition of advertising supplied by *The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language (Deluxe Encyclopedic Edition)*. It sees advertising as “any system or method of attracting public notice to an event to be attended, or the desirability of commercial products for sale.” (21-20). Advertising serves a marketing function by helping companies and organizations sell their products – goods and/or services. Advertising is educational as people learn about new products and services and get more information and orientation about existing ones. Advertising also plays an economic role as it allows new competitors enter the business arena. This encourages product improvement and can lead to lower prices. As part of the economic role, advertising reaches a mass audience thereby reducing cost of personal selling and distribution. Advertising performs definite social function as it helps increase productivity and raises the standard of living.

Advertising gets to the audience through various organs of communication – the media. These include radio, television, the print media, the internet, billboards, posters, the small media and cinema (film). Specialists in advertising choose the media to use based on four major criteria. According to Dominick (378), the criteria are: reach, frequency, selectivity, and efficiency. Film could be said to be an effective medium for advertising as it scores high on these criteria.

Advertising and the Film Medium

Our generation is an audio-visual friendly one. This position tilts more towards film which has come to occupy a very prominent position in our global village world and information and communication era. Writes the art historian and critic, Erwin Panofsky,

If all the serious lyric poets, composers, painters and sculptors were forced by law to stop their activities, a rather small fraction of the general public would seriously regret it. If the same were to happen with the movies, the social consequences would be catastrophic (quoted in Quart & Auster, 2)

Film has a universal power of communication which is further engendered by its creation of the aura of reality. Hence, film “takes its viewers to the realm of reality and believability” (Awaeze & Nworgu 37). It is this fact that has helped viewing culture (visual literature) displace reading culture so much so that

... we do not bother very much for some time now to ask about what ... people read (if they read at all) rather we have started to ask about ... what is

the latest video or film watched or purchased.
(Bamidele as quoted in Orié, 37).

The above scenario applies to the contemporary Nigeria society with double emphasis.

One fact that has continued to sustain the Nigeria video film industry, Nollywood, is that it has an audience so thirsty for self and indigenous representation on screen almost to the point of fanaticism. This audience cuts across various classes and social status. To M'Bayo and Onabajo (98), Nollywood "remains the only medium that has broken the barriers of class and other social-cultural inhibitions. Today, no matter one's level, at one time or the other, we all have used the video". The writers went further to regret that "it is however baffling that such an infectious medium has not been fully utilized by Nigeria and Nigerians". Their worry stems from the fact that Nollywood has the reach, frequency, selectivity and efficiency necessary to make it an appropriate medium for advertising.

Embedded Marketing.

Wikipedia, the free web encyclopedia, defines embedded marketing as "any form of audiovisual commercial communication consisting of the inclusion of or reference to a product, a service or the trade mark thereof so that it is featured within a programme". Product placement and concept placement are parts of embedded marketing.

In product placement, materials with brand names or logos/trademarks are shown in a movie. To Gross and Ward (259), product placement means "having material with brand names showing in a movie in return for payments from the company that makes the material". Still defining product placement, *Wikipedia*

states that it is “a form of advertisement where branded goods or services are placed in a context usually devoid of ads, such as movies, music Video the story line of television shows, or news programmes”.

Product placement is a practice that dates back to publishing in the 19th century precisely to the publication of Jules Verne’s adventure novel *Around the World in Eight Days* (1873). Owing to the fame of Verne as a literary giant, transport and shipping companies lobbied to be mentioned in the story as it was published in series. Strong emotional connection, better dovetailing with relevant content, and targeting a specific audience group are some of the reasons for product placement.

Product placement has been a part of film for long and still is. In 2002, for instance, Volkswagen spent an estimated 200 million dollars to be integrated into the NBC Universal films. The reason for such big spending for product placement is simple – “Advertisers patronize channels that attract great viewership, as that is where more persons will get the message that they are passing across” (Ayakoroma, 257). Film presents such an intimidating viewership for advertising. Also, high profile stars draw more attention to films and this subsequently means more celebrity endorsement for the placed goods and/or services. This accounts for the effectiveness of product placement in the film industry.

Closely related to product placement is concept placement – “the insertion or relevant ... related messages into film scripts ...” (Evuleocha, 410). In concept placement, the corporate messages of government, her agencies and other legal organizations and institutions are inserted in films – usually interwoven into the plot of such films. Concept placement banks on the extraordinary power of film in mobilizing the masses, as well as the large number

of people film reaches out to, to achieve its aim. An instance of this could be seen in the Nollywood film *30 Days* where Oando paid to be placed (Okon, 2009).

EMBEDDED MARKETING/ PLACEMENTS IN NOLLYWOOD.

Many Nollywood video films contain instances where brand names of goods and services and names of companies appear in films. Some of such placements are so obvious that even an uncritical viewer takes note of them. Yet, the crux of the matter is if the filmmakers actually get paid proportionally for such placements.

The Video film *Miss Fashion* (2011) presents the obsession of most ladies about beauty pageants. In a scene in the Video film, the Miss Fashion, Mirable (Tonto Dike) tries to tune from one station to another on her television set. A point-of-view (POV) shot shows the television set. On its screen appears the brand name DSTV West Africa. This stays in the full view of the viewer for several seconds as if the scene is a paid advert of DSTV. In several other scenes in *Miss Fashion* and its serial part *Miss Fashion Parade*, brand names and trademarks of several companies and products are shown in manners suggestive of actual advertisements for such companies and their products. Nike, Havanah Plastics, Etisalat, Eva Table Water, and Mortien Insecticide are some of the companies and products that benefited from such indirect advertisements in *Miss Fashion* and *Miss Fashion Parade*.

The *Black Berry Babes* (BBB) series is one long scroll of advertisements for the Canadian Company, Research In Motion, (RIM) and its products – the Black Berry smart phones. The series is made up of the video films *Black Berry Babes* (2011) and *The Return of the Black Berry Babes* (2011). Various models of the Black Berry were given expositions and consequently advertised in the

series. Apart from these overt advertisements for Black Berry and, by extension, Research In Motion, some other social networks, companies, and products also benefited from one form of advertisement or the other in the *Black Berry Babes* series.

In the *Black Berry Babes* series, we see a form of brand integration– “incorporation of products into the actual plot of a film or television show...” (*Wikipedia*). Such integrations are usually paid for, and handsomely too, by the brand owners. The *Black Berry Babes* series is a radical marketing of Research In Motion’s Black Berry. The film attempted and achieved to a good length the communication theory of Diffusion of Innovation.

The various models of Black Berry and the edges they have over each other, the fraudulent uses, as well as the proper uses to which Black Berry Smart Phones can be put to in Nigeria, were given proper expositions. Beside these obvious expositions in the film, some other brand products were placed in *Black Berry Babes*. This work is not an analysis of the Black Berry Babes series, but special mention must be made of the theme music of Etisalat Nigeria that was heard playing in the car the character of Damisa (Oge Okoye) was driving as he was being chased by Emeka (Chigozie Atuanya). It was an obvious advertisement for that company. It is estimated that there are about 2.4 million Black Berry Users in Nigeria and that is as a result of the 150% growth of Black Berry usage in Nigeria in 2011 (Wagan Vota, 2) Africa has the biggest market for Black Berry in recent times with Nigeria among the top users. Wayan Vota quotes one Ory Okollah as stating that it has gotten to a stage where Research in Motion should move their headquarters from Canada to Nigeria.

Our argument here is that at no cost, the Video film the *Black Berry Babes* series did a radical advertisement of Black Berry smart phones. This holds water when we note that a greater

percentage of Black Berry users in Nigeria are tech savvy youths. This researcher did a random survey of two hundred (200) Black Berry users in four (4) tertiary institutions in Imo and Delta States. It was revealed that about 30% of the respondents agree to having been influenced directly or indirectly to buy Black Berry by the film *Black Berry Babes* and its sequel part *The Return of Black Berry Babes*.

There have been calls for Research In Motion to sponsor another major movie in the fashion of *Black Berry Babes* (Black Berry cool; Noetico.IT). These calls believe that if such a movie is sponsored by R.I.M, it will promise much more improvement in filmmaking in Nollywood. This work opines that in addition to sponsoring another movie, RIM should also support the box office returns of the *Black Berry Babes* series.

Advanced placement and basic placement were adopted in *Black Berry Babes*. In basic placement, the brand name of a product or the trade mark of a company is made visible in some scenes but the characters do not draw further attention to them. Advanced placement is when the brand name of a product or name of a company is mentioned severally in the film to draw much attention to it. The *Black Berry Babes* series is one long Scroll of showing and mentioning the brand name Black Berry and its different models. There have been other such films in the *Black Berry Babes* fashion including *Fazebook Babes*, *Fazebook Queens*, *2 go Babes* and *2 Go Queens*.

In Nollywood, negotiations for placements are applicable rather than placements paid for. This, of course, is minimal. In this instance, products could be obtained at little or no cost from manufacturers for use in a film. These include props, costume, cars being loaned for production uses, and welfare materials for cast and crew. It can also come in form of obtaining locations from their owners at little or no cost. These reduce the cost of production of

such films by saving the filmmakers some purchase or rental fees. In this arrangement, products of such patrons or their names or trade marks are deliberately placed in the films in exchange of fees.

Not much has been seen of concept placement in Nollywood. Most evangelical films indirectly weave the messages of salvation of their makers into their themes. These have in most instance made their marks. Yet, Nollywood is ripe enough for concept placements in order to help solve certain problems in the country.

Nigeria is a country bedeviled by various shades of problems. Prominent among these problems in recent times are corruption and insecurity. Every successive governments claim to be fighting these vices that have become somewhat cancerous in our national polity. Usually, the first point of call for such campaigns against these vices is the media. Onuora Nwuneli explains the short comings of such media in developing countries saying

The use of inaccessible channel to transfer social action programmes has been one of the greatest problems confronting social development in the African region. All along the tendency has been to use modern mass Media to create awareness and conductive attitude changes on the part of audience (203).

Film has an edge over all other media of mass communication. It has the ability to persuade, convince, project and reshape opinions of people (Oklobia, 74). It is therefore argued here that it has reached the stage where government should rightly incorporate Nollywood, in addition to other mass media, in

preaching social action programmes. This position was taken about a decade ago by Rose Akaer when she posited that:

Drama especially in Video film form is generally renowned for its power in mobilizing the masses. Since these video films reach such a large number of people in Nigeria, playwrights (sic) and producers could design them in such a way that apart from entertaining, they could also conscentize and teach the people to learn to accept and accommodate one another, to love, and especially cherish one another.

These films could be specially structured in such ways that the plot could speak directly to the audience of the need to forget ethnic, sectional, religious and cultural differences and to accept one another irrespective of such differences (317).

Through this way, Nollywood would have significant impact on the quest for a better, more united, developed as well as crime and corruption free Nigeria like other sister film industries.

...if the church changed lives (attitude) through showing of films, developmental efforts, if packaged in films (videos)... can lead to skill acquisition; lessons can be learnt, incidental learning can be achieved and overall attitude change which is the crux of change or development, can be affected (M'Bayo & Onabajo, 84).

Nigeria can also use Nollywood to sell herself through concept placement. While stating that “if put to proper use, Nigeria can use the film as a propaganda tool to the outside world,” M’Bayo and Onabajo cited the renowned Nollywood director Teco Benson as saying that

The movie industry is an affect tool in image laundering for Nigeria. Through American movies over the decades, the myth of an invincible America has been sold to the rest of the world to an extent that it appeared unbelievable that Osama Bin Laden achieved September 11, which was an embarrassment to the Americans (101).

To achieve what this paper is proposing with Nollywood, the government should come up with good legislations that will have the relevant agencies place their corporate messages in Nollywood films at some intervals. The filmmakers will be made to compete for concepts to be placed in their films. The best scripts will be selected at each interval for concept placements by governments

There is already a pool of funds that government can fall back on. On the 7th of November, 2011, President Goodluck Jonathan announced a 200 million dollars commitment to the Nigerian entertainment industry “as a direct intervention lifetime for the exclusive purpose of supporting artistes and developing our entertainment industry” (Abulu, 46). If such a fund is sustained, it could be invested in the entertainment industry through concept placement. The present Subsidy Re-investment Programme (SURE P) of the federal government can also benefit Nollywood- the second highest employer of labour and revenue earner in Nigeria.

Some grandeur programmes and polices of government and her agencies could be further packaged in film- the visual literature of contemporary times. This is in addition to the media campaigns. For Nigerians to further appreciate such programmes and policies as vision 20:2020 and re-branding crusade among others, they must be sufficiently mobilized and tutored on the basic principles. The medium of film, through concept placement, has multiple outlets for this.

The National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIT) deserves some commendation here for her placement of the cooperate message of the agency in an episode of *Super Story* titled "Itoha". The episode is a fine expose of the issue of human trafficking and the several shapes it can take in recent times. Yet this work believes that such a concept is better placed in films because of the ephemeral and transient nature of the broadcast media. Most Nigerian viewers may not even view the broadcast due to such hindrances as the nagging power problems in Nigeria. Placing such a concept in film (a more permanent medium) will engender more reach, frequency, selectivity, and efficiency. The viewers can also go back to their film at their own convenience.

Conclusion

Placements in contemporary Nollywood films can be harnessed as alternative sources of funds for the industry. In product placement, branded goods and service as well as the name and/ or trademarks of companies are made to show in movies usually in return for payments made by the company to the filmmaker(s). Concept placement is the insertion of corporate messages of government, her agencies and legal organizations into films.

Because film has an extraordinary universal power of appeal, embedded marketing (product and concept placements) is effective. This is more so as films reach out to a large number of people. Yet product placements in Nollywood are not commensurately rewarded where they are rewarded at all. In many instances, filmmakers are not aware that they carrying out product placements for some products and companies. They therefore do great services to these products and companies at little or no cost, and consequently do great disservice to filmmaking. Concept placement on the other hand is virtually non-existent

This paper has so far argued that placement should be harnessed to be alternative sources of revenue in Nollywood. Product placement will provide products and locations that can add to the below-the-line savings for productions. This will also provide funds that will aid filmmakers achieve certain technicalities instead of cutting corners that make mockery of Nollywood films.

On the other hand, concept placement will provide more than the above stated benefits for Nollywood. In addition to the financial gains, concept placement will help improve the quality of films produced in the industry as it will prompt filmmakers to make efforts to win government placement through quality films. It will provide subtle ways for government to attempt to sanitize the industry because he who provides the fund for a film usually has a voice in the content of such a film. Put in other words, "What determines the theme of a film is what the financier feels will make the film viable" (Chikwendu cited in Onabajo & Oladapo 124).

Concept placement in Nollywood will also impact positively on the sociology of film in Nigeria. Through concept placement, Nollywood will be able to contribute in meaningful campaigns to better various aspects of our national policy. Certain

sensitive messages will be passed to the people with ease. The film industry will witness gradually restructurings that will engender more job opportunities that can absorb more persons and reduce the numerical strength of potential criminals.

Adequate harnessing of placements in Nollywood will lead to the emergence of placement experts. This new area of specialty will engender further researches that will reveal new radical ways of making film serve the state and the economy. Product and concept placements should be harnessed and employed in Nollywood to help gradually revolutionize the industry and enhance its sociological functions to the Nigeria nation.

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