

# FILM AS AN EXPRESSIVE TOOL FOR POPULAR MOVEMENT IN TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT: THE NIGERIAN PARADIGM

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## Abstract

*After the movements and struggles for independence, African countries in contemporary times have been confronted with the need for a new kind of struggle in the area of socio-economic development. And in this regard, art – in its diverse forms, is key to the actualisation of such struggle. To this effect, it is the objective of this paper, therefore, to examine, film (a popular art form), as expressive tool for popular movement in tourism promotion in Africa. Using the Nigerian film industry as a model, the paper in its findings observed that African films have not effectively showcased, projected, promoted and explored the African cultural space including the aesthetics of its tourism endowments for socio-economic purposes and regional development. Rather than being thematically preoccupied with such issues as witchcraft, money ritual and so on, which constantly characterise the making of our films, this paper, through utilitarianism theoretical framework, thereby posits and recommends that the film medium should be utilised as a tool for popular movement in promoting tourism towards socio-economic development in the African region.*

*KEY WORDS: Film Media, Arts, Tourism, Popular Movement, Development*

## INTRODUCTION

Art is a powerful tool, and if properly harnessed in its diverse forms, can serve as an effective tool and also as a catalyst for spontaneous socio-economic and political development in any economy or country of the world. In the light of this all-important hallmark of art, this research beams its search light on a popular

art medium – the film medium, as an expressive tool for popular movement in tourism promotion and marketability for socio-economic development in Africa. And in doing this, the Nigerian film industry is focused on as a case study.

### **WHY THE NIGERIAN PARADIGM?**

The paradigm of the Nigerian film industry as an art form is primarily the focus of this study because the industry has become the most popular, the largest and the most vocal voice coming out of the African continent which has also become a force to be reckoned with even in international film studies and intellectual/academic discussions. Discussions during the Berlin Annual African film and Media Festival held in 2013 in Germany, supports this view in the declaration that the Nigerian film industry is known to be the most popular on the African continent. This can also be said to be the general view of the film industry analysts who believe that the Nigerian cinema is the most popular on the African continent (as published by the African Renewal – an online academic journal, May 2013).

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

As populous, large and full of prospects as the Nigerian film industry is, yet it is found wanting in some areas of its thematic preoccupation. And this is what constitutes the premise of the problem statement of this study. What this means is that the Nigerian film industry, in its projection of artistic, aesthetic and economic values, has been majorly preoccupied with such themes as witchcraft, money ritual, love, and such as these, as found in such films as *Aye* by late Hubert Ogunde, *Aje Meta* by Funke Akindele, *Aje Niyami*, *the Monster in Me I & II*, just to mention a few. In this regard, this study in the mannerism of popular movement, thereby, concerns itself with the problem of how to move the attention of the Nigerian film industry and indeed

Africa's, away from its thematic and aesthetic preoccupation towards the promotion, projection and marketability of the African tourism endowments for socio-economic benefits, gains and development.

## **FILM AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

Based on the stated problem of mundane and ritualised thematic preoccupation of the Nigerian/African film industry, it could be postulated that there is need for a new movement in the area of thematic concerns. The film medium as a popular art form can be aesthetically utilized to foster the promotion and development of the Nigerian/African tourism industry for socio-economic benefits. And in doing this, a positive synergy is created between art and socio-economic development in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. Oguntoyinbo (2012) and Adeyeye (2013) in their advocacy for a new movement and the need to break new grounds in the area of developing the Nigerian economy, explain that every emerging economy – such as found in most African countries, has its prospect and challenges; and to overcome these and bring about the much desired positive socio-economic development in Africa, there must be ample room for diversification of the economy. Part of this diversification is what this study has focussed on with respect to the need for the film art to be fully developed and deployed for the promotion and marketability of the Nigerian tourism industry – a great prospect for the development of the Nigerian economy through diversification.

The film industry in Nigeria has contributed immensely towards the economic growth and development of the nation. Different scholars and researchers have written about this and their works are worthy of note here for a robust intellectual discussion. In the light of this, Uzundu (2014) explains that Nigeria's film industry otherwise known as Nollywood has contributed greatly to the economic development of the country, particularly in the area of

employment. And to further support this, an attempt at quantifying Nollywood's economic worth by Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/cinema-of-nigeria>) roughly estimates that;

The cinema of Nigeria, often referred to as Nollywood grew quickly in the 1990s and 2000s and became the second largest film industry in the world in number of productions, placing it ahead of the United States and behind only India.... The Nigeria film industry is worth N853.9 billion (US\$5.1 billion) as at 2014. (Para. 2)

The conclusion to be drawn from this is that the film art as exemplified by the Nigerian film industry has contributed to the socio-economic development of the nation in the areas of employment, poverty reduction, national GDP and so on. More so, the social, historical and cultural importance of film in relation to the development of a people has also been intellectually as well as critically exemplified by scholars in the field. Kolker (2006) and Career Review – an academic journal (2011) enumerate the significance of the storytelling culture of film as an art of audio-visual storytelling; the medium of communication rich in social implications, created within different social, historical and cultural contexts. What this means is that the film industry has got greater potentials for the socio-economic, cultural and historical development of a nation.

Beyond this, other scholars have also established the massive impact that film has in mobilising people in the culture of popular movement for a particular cause due to its effective communicative impact on people. Uzundu (2014) in giving a clearer picture on this explains in simple terms that it is an established fact that Nollywood movies are useful tools to manipulate the psyche of the

people more than any other medium of communication. The hallmark of this is that the film art has that power to influence people socio-economically. And perhaps, the most interesting point being made in support of the argument is found in the words of Opubor and Nwaneli (1979) who posit that:

Of all the media of mass communication, the motion picture has perhaps the most universal appeal and impact. Properly conceived and executed, a film can rise above the limitations of language and cultural barriers by the power of its visual images, its use of music and sound effects can succeed in conveying much the same message to audiences of heterogeneous background... Because of film potential effectiveness in communication emotions and ideas, V. I. Lenin, the soviet leader, referred to film as the most important of all arts for the construction of socialism. (Pg 1)

Bearing in mind that film has the ability to impact lives and influence opinion, there is need for film makers to channel the cause of the commitment of the Nigerian/African film industry towards the promotion, marketability and harnessing of the potential of the continents' tourism endowments. In lieu of this, it is posited that the Nigerian film industry in its diverse commitments and preoccupations should turn its compass in the area of the tourism endowments in Africa for proper maximisation of this for socio-economic benefits. There needs to be a synergy of these two for socio-economic development in Africa.

## **METHODOLOGY/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

As this study has developed from the ambience of the sociology of art, it has adopted the theoretical qualitative rather than quantitative research method, with utilitarianism forming the core

value of its theoretical framework. In this regard, the scope of the sociology of art according to Bamidele (2000) and Oguntoyinbo (2012) has often considered the role of art and the artist in the society; this simply has to do with intellectual studies reasoned along the line of art and society, as against the 'Aesthetic theory' of art which sees and believes that 'art is for arts sake'. To this effect, this study has considered the role of art – film particularly in this regard – in bringing about socio-economic development in Nigeria (Africa) through the advancement of the tourism industry. Utilitarianism is the theory of art which focuses on the need for art to perform specific roles in the society. To this school of thought, art should not just exist only for its aesthetics, but should play an important role in contributing to the development of the society. And in order to drive home the point on utilitarianism with regards to art, Olayiwola and Babatope (2014) quote G. V. Plekhanov (1912) directly as he explains that:

Some say: man is not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for man; society is not made for the artist, but the artist for the society. The function of art is to assist the development of man's consciousness, to improve the social system.

Film art, in this particular instance, becomes the expressive tool for bringing about the much desired development of man's consciousness to improve the social system. And in order to achieve this, there is the urgent need in popular movement to create a synergy of the film art and tourism.

## **TOURISM AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Tourism, all over the world, without any doubt, has become an important factor that contributes to the socio-economic development and nation building of many nations of the world.

More and more continents/countries of the world have greatly profited from this for socio-economic development. Europe, America, and more recently Asia, are all at the fore of this economic production. On the other hand, the same cannot be said of Africa. In this regard, Nigeria as an African nation appears to be lagging behind in the area of maximising its tourism potentials for great socio-economic benefits. There are over 70 tourism centres spread across the length and breadth of the Nigeria with each of these having great prospects and potentials. In line with this, Awaritefe (2005) in his evaluation of the tourism resource areas in Nigeria for developmental purposes identifies and classifies 99 tourist attractions in Nigeria, dividing them into 8 tourist regions. These regions cover Lagos tourism region, Western tourism region, Edo/Delta, River Niger/Benue tourism region, East Central/South Eastern, North-Eastern, Middle region and Northern tourism region. It is important to note here that this total number is inclusive of prominent and important resorts, national reserves, parks and hotels with tourism prospects. And the division into regions gives detailed and precise location of each of these tourist attractions in Nigeria. More so, according to Popushoi (2015), it can be stated that tourism is directly linked with the cultural, economic, social and intellectual life of a country and the current statistical data shows that tourism is defined as one of the most profitable and rapidly developing industries in the world. This view buttress the point earlier made, highlighting the importance of tourism to a nation's socio-economic development. In the light of this, Oavouraini (2012) argues that:

Nigeria is endowed with a wealth of rich varied human, natural and cultural resources which are great assets to the country's tourism development. However, despite the growth of international tourism and its importance in developing countries, in Nigeria the tourism industry has not grown significantly.

## **FILM AS A VEHICLE FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

Two important factors have emerged in earlier arguments and theses are- that the Nigerian film industry as an art form is popular and full of potentials; that tourism in Nigeria with its mass natural resources, endowments and cultural heritage, has been described as having great prospects to become one of the most profitable and rapidly developing industries in the world. Film could become a vehicle for the promotion of Nigerian tourism given its wide reach, global import and intra-continental impact if producers pay more attention to effective image laundering and positive portrayal of Nigeria's huge environmental resources and tourist attractions in film narratives and scenery. With the current situation, one could assert that the film industry in its thematic as well as aesthetic preoccupation has largely neglected the tourism potentials of the nation by its scant promotion and showcasing of this prospective economic goldmine.

With recourse to this, there is the need for a popular movement – from the different quarters of the stakeholders- academics, media practitioners, film producers, directors and critics, tourism administrator and professionals, state and federal government, etc, to move for stronger advocacy in maximising the potentials of Nigeria's film and tourism industries for the desired socio-economic development in the country. As popular movement in its ideology has to do with an awakening call for a group of people working harmoniously towards achieving a particular goal, there is the urgent need in this regard for the stakeholders in the Nigerian film and tourism industries as well as the government to form an alliance in creating a synergy for national development.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**



This study, has examined film and tourism and the interrelationship between these two with recourse to socio-economic development in Nigeria. In this regard, it has x-rayed the popularity of the Nigeria film industry otherwise known as Nollywood, being the second largest film industry in the world, in terms of its monetary and aesthetics values as well as its contribution to the overall socio-economic development of the country. More so, the study's search-light is, more importantly, beamed on the Nigerian tourism industry in all of its grandeur in natural resources, endowments and gross prospects and potentials for socio-economic development. And to cap all these up, the need for synergy between these two – film and tourism for purposes of promoting Nigeria's tourist potentials for local and international patronage. The study therefore, recommends the need for a synergy between the Nigerian film industry and the tourism industry for socio-economic benefits and development. The Nigerian film industry, in all its popularity should be strongly committed in its aesthetics and thematic preoccupation to the showcasing, promotion and marketability of the vast Nigerian tourism endowments.

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