

Nollywood and Hollywood Posters: A Comparative Analysis of Design Principles

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Abstract

Posters are one of the main mediums for disseminating information as well as creating awareness of products and events. The Nollywood industry like most other organizations has explored this medium to bring to the public's attention the latest and trending films which the industry produces rapidly. The objective of the study is to examine the Nollywood poster and its design output in terms of colour, typography and photography in comparison to its Hollywood counterpart, analyse Nollywood posters using modern principles and techniques, examine if Nollywood posters create any impact on the audience and try to examine what it lacks in terms of principles design methods and proffer ways to improve on them so as to meet up with international standard of graphic designing which is aimed at boosting the industry's outcome in terms of increased viewership. Suggested solutions were proffered.

Introduction

Posters is a printed paper designed to be attached to a wall or vertical surface Gosling (1999). A poster conveys information through text and most of the times with images or symbols. Posters come in varying sizes and are usually produced large enough to be seen at a relatively short distance which are usually posted on walls or other surfaces while the really smaller ones called the hand bills can be handed to individuals to read. The larger ones can be seen from far in the form of Billboards. Artsalive (2018) tells us of what an effective poster does to the audience

which is 1. Grab attention 2. Entice the audience to read the information 3. Present the information clearly so the audience fully understand what is being said 4. Convince the audience to take action. This implies that any form of poster must have both persuasive and informative qualities. various posters are produced for various needs and vocations. The types that have evolved over time are; Marketing posters, Educational posters, Events posters, Film posters, scientific posters and much more. These posters serve various functions like marketing products, convincing the audience to do one thing or the other, alerting them about some happenings around and announcing events. This paper focuses on the film poster with particular reference to the Nollywood posters and look at ways they can be used to not only alert the public on the latest films available but also to be impactful enough to arouse the curiosity of the audience to watch the movies.

Uses of posters in the film industry

The film industry evokes an air of show business and glamour and film poster are supposed to help portray this glamorous image as well as help create intrigue and compel the audience to watch films. Opasinski (2016) in Thacker (2016) says the aim of a movie poster is to lead the audience to the film's main plot twist and then leave them wanting more. Film posters are diverse and play different functions. The types available are Teaser posters, Character Posters, Main Poster.

Teaser posters

Teaser posters also called an advance poster is used to promote a film earlier before the film is released for public viewing. Shortlist (2013) explains that these posters were initially conceived as a way to increase long term excitement for just the blockbuster films but is now being used for variety of films to ensure people buy tickets earlier for their films. The contents of the teaser poster usually consist of the date for the release of the film without revealing too much. Most of them would have a sentence from the movie to help whet the appetite of the audience and an intriguing imagery of an extract or clip of the film which usually serves the function of arousing the curiosity of the viewer. Styles in teaser poster vary from using only a symbol associated with the film or just the title



Fig.2: Surulere. A character poster used to showcase a character in the movie.

Source: Audrey Silva xploreNollywood.com (2016)

Main Poster

The main poster is used to give an overview of the movie it includes the date and sometimes the venue they often feature photographs of the main actors as well as a film scene or an array of overlaid images from several scenes. The movie poster is very important because it helps the viewers not only know about an upcoming film but is able to give them an idea of what the film is about from some of the scenes shown and viewers are more attracted to watch a film when they know that their favourite actor is in the movie. The whole design is therefore aimed to get the viewers to watch the movie.

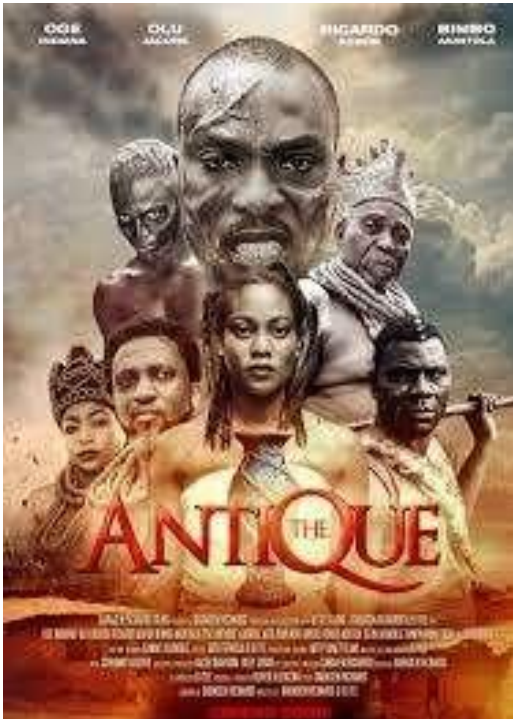


Fig.3: Main poster showing casted actors in the movie scene.

Source: naijagist.com (2015)

The paper will focus on the main movie posters and the effectiveness they have in attracting viewers to watch a film.

Modern principles in poster designing

Poster designing involves planning images, letters and other elements to create a visual image message, this is what is referred as layout design. Graphic artists like page editors and designers use layout design to make their work visually appealing and easy to understand. Main elements in any poster design are the colours, photography and typography and the way these elements are used to create a layout is key to good designing.

Colour

The use of colour in a design is very important. When a design is colourful attention is drawn to it and it can be used to stimulate an emotion. Akanni (2012) stated that the role of colour in product advertisement is an act of stimulating, captivating consumers' attention and interest for a purpose. This is also true concerning movie posters. Graphic design institute (2014) stated that colour played a crucial role in setting the mood in designs, stimulates our imagination. There is no best palette for a culture or group so we need to understand the meaning of colours so that they will effectively support our message and provoke the audience to bound behaviours. Colours are commonly divided into the warm and cool colours. The warm colours like red, yellow, orange are active colours and induce excitement and appear to move closer to the viewer. The cool colours which include blue, green, violet thought they don't attract attention, emphasize the content while the neutrals form contrast and bring all the colours out and act as compliments of the other colours according to Graphic design institute (2014). How should the designer apply colour then? Rider (2009) expressed that colours should be used to relate with the audience in witty, intelligent and conversational ways.

Typography

Typography is the art and technique of arranging types to make written language readable and appealing (Wikipedia 2018). Typography gives the message in a design a clearer and concise meaning. It helps determine the mood or the underlying meaning of the design. A well-chosen type face can strengthen the imaginative perception of an advertisement. Typography is used for headlines, titles of movies as well as for body copy and in the case of movies; subtitles, narratives and for writing casts. For effective typography the following principle is expected

Titles or headline should be written in large prints. The reason for the large size is given in the definition of the writers Bureau (2018). *An attention grabbing short text placed at the top of the page indicating the contents of the article following.* So the reason for large print is for attention. . So using small or weak type styles to write would render the design ineffective especially in the face of the fact that it has to compete

with hundreds of other posters vying for viewer's attention. Jordan (2018) criteria for an attention grabbing headline is that it will be **robust, unique and impactful** achieved through skilful contrasts. Some of the contrasts in typography stated Berry (2003) are the contrast in size, weight, form, structure, texture, colour and direction adding that the most common use of contrast, is the contrast of size which is in the use of headlines and body copy.

The way typography is used and arranged is very important in design. When used properly typography increases the understanding or meaning of the message. Bad arrangement and positioning of the words can affect the message. One of the ways of making posters effective is to show hierarchy that is to order the title, subtitle and body copy by size. Meaning the title should be the first to be seen with dominant noticeable font followed by the subtitle with smaller fonts which will support the title and finally the body copy with smaller but easily readable prints. The underlying aim in typography is to make sure that the crucial elements are seen first.

Photography

Photography is one of the major medium used for illustration in modern times. It is important for emphasizing and making the intension of the advertiser known or clearer. Illustration/photography is used for attention, retention, understanding in the context of the teaching-learning situation stated Comet (2015).

Attention is the notice taken of something. It is an enthrallment, selectively concentrating on a discrete aspect of information while ignoring other perceivable information according to Johnson (2004). So the photograph will draw attention then will be one that is noticeable, interesting, and keep one enthralled. One of the ways is the composition of the photograph There are so many principles which guide composition in photography some of them include the way the objects are positioned, how to crop the area within the field of view, how to determine the eye along the path or direction followed by the viewer's eye when they observe the picture, the use of contrasts, lighting and so forth.

When a poster holds attention long enough it invokes retention. There is a need for the poster designer to ensure that the viewers retain

what they have seen (keep them enthralled) to evoke retention. One of the ways is novelty and creativity seems to be the key to do this Cousins (2018) suggested ways to make what she describes as “an awesome” poster. Some of them include using colour to create energy, use of high quality photographs to make it realistic, use of large photograph, a good poster has to be seen and understood at a variety of distances, juxtaposition of images creating visual hierarchy, using negative or white space to create composition and many more.

Hollywood Posters and their design approaches of conveying messages

Hollywood film industry as well as its poster started since the early 20th century according to Hale (2018). The first poster was used to promote the showing of the film *L'arroseur arrose* at the Grande Café in 1895. Since then Hollywood film posters have waxed from strength to strength from placards outside film houses to large designs with large illustrations of different scenes overlaying each other. Part of the things that inspire their method of designing includes the need to communicate fast, the need to create instant impact and of course the storyline. The following images show some Hollywood designs pertaining to colour, typography and photography and how the designers have used them to achieve their aim.

Colour

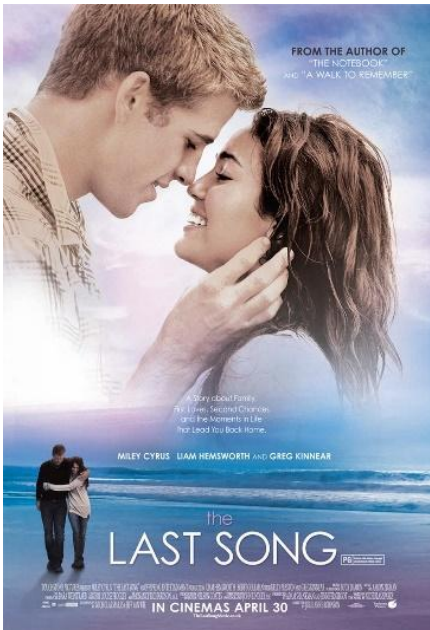


Fig: 4: Hollywood Poster “Last Song” (2010) using colour to reflect the theme of the movie.

Source: filmofilia .com. (2018)

Films come with themes and part of the elements that is used to reflect these themes are colours. The theme of romance is strong in this film and it was important that apart from the illustration, the colour would help to re-emphasize this. The colours used for this poster are blue and purple. The colour blue symbolizes trust worthiness and also some erotic undertone opined Evad (2009). The hue used is not just any blue but “light blue” which according to Evad (2009) is inspired by water. Which leaves us in no doubt as to what the designer is trying to portray in the poster. Evad(2009) also goes on to say that purple the other colour used is a feminine romantic colour. Other attributes that are associated with it are passionate, unpredictable and quixotic. These two colours are quite strong in the design. It leaves the audience in no doubt as to what the designer is trying to portray. The slim type face of the title all help to reiterate the

theme of love and romance boldly. For those romantically inclined these recurrent themes and innuendoes would serve as a strong pull to go and view the movie.

Typography

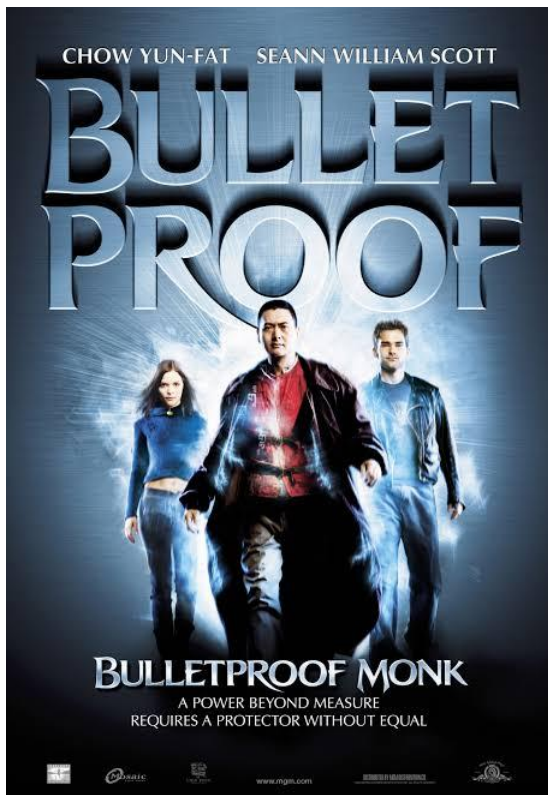


Fig. 5: Hollywood poster “Bullet proof Monk” (2003) with strong typography.

Source: Peter Tangen (2014)

Typography plays a strong role in poster designing. Part of the numerous roles it plays include helping to make the design more impactful, helping to give it more meaning amongst other things. The Hollywood poster

designer is well aware of this and pays attention to its use in the different context of the design. The poster titled “Bullet Proof Monk “is a typical example of one of these. The words bullet proof is written in bold embossed fonts that is the colour of the background with a black shadow to help project it from the background. The overall effect is a word that is emerging from a background. The illustration of the three figures with that of the monk a bit larger than the other two along with the typography of the words bullet proof monk leaves us in no doubt of who we are talking about especially as the image of the monk is directly behind the wordings. The repetition of the words below helps to make the meaning of the tittle clearer as it is now understood that bullet proof refers to the monk. One gets the message immediately that the monk is a formidable character. The poster is clear concise and simple and at the same time quite impactful. The viewers with an inclination for action movies would be immediately drawn to this movie.

Photography



Fig. 6: Hollywood poster Drive (2011) using colour and illustration to gain attention.

Source: Behance.net (2018)

Photography is the major element that help to draw attention to a poster design. When the poster has interesting illustrations the tendency to linger and look at the poster is greater. The artistic treatment of the design can also go a long way in helping the design gain attention. The Nollywood poster Drive illustrates a design in which the designer decided to play on picture effect. The title “Drive” obviously does not conjure up much imagery except that of a driver. That being the case the designer decides to do more to the picture than just display a driver which is common place. So the psychedelic effect of pink against a black background gives the image a distinct glow. The light blue helps to give the glow effect as well as depict a night scene. So we get the effect of someone behind a wheel driving with light rays on his face. The line effect on the window, eyes and the body gives the effect of movement. It is interesting to note that though we don’t see an actual wheel, the effect of the image and treatment gives the impression of a driver focus behind a wheel in motion. The type font of the title and the colour all complete the effect of the tittle drive.

Holly wood designers from the illustrations above take every movie by itself and treat it to give meaning and direction of what the movies are about. Every image, typography and layout are done deliberately to convey a certain message. Each message on the poster is quite impactful and help arouse curiosity to make a viewer want go and find out more about the movie.

The Local Nollywood Poster and Its Design Methods

The Nollywood movie industry like all other film industries needs posters to advertise its new or soon coming movies. The posters used for advertising these films would need to be effective to garner in viewers. As earlier stated by Artsalive (2018) that the effective poster must catch attention, entice one to read the information, make the information clear, easy to be understood and convince one to take action by way of doing or buying the product. Two locally produced Nollywood posters will be examined to determine if they meet with the modern principles of design.

Nollywood Colour and Typography



Fig.7: Game Boys (2016)

Source: naijapals.com 2016

The movie poster examined is entitled “Game Boys” (Fig.7), it was assessed in terms of colour and typography. The title suggests people in romantic relationships and the sort of games or escapades associated with play boys hence the apparent use of dice and chess puns. The predominant orange and pink background though agreeing with the romantic genre (which associate red with love and pink with sensitivity Avoleoo (2016) however lacks in subtlety and creativity in its method of application. Colours are arbitrarily used from the multi-coloured title to red hue of the female actor in combination of the already pink and orange background all seem too much warm colours for one design .Application of colours should be carried out in a creative manner by a designer to carry along the consumer into reading the copy and other elements through the selection of scintillating colour elements and arranging them in an interesting and meaningful layout to get the communication through to them in an effective fascinating and convincing way (Akanni 2012.57). Using colours that don’t work together or the use of too many or too little colours could drive people away Apart from the Illustration and the general design, colour also plays a significant role on typography. Colour increases the aesthetic value of typography and the design in general. The purpose of applying colour is decorative and intended to draw attention to the typefaces used. It also facilitates perception and assimilation. Donev

(2015) Applying colour to type has an impact on hierarchy and separates information visually. Apart from the typography being weak in itself because of the light wavy type face, the use of many colours make it appear quite childish and mediocre making it difficult to place which genre the movie is categorized. The use of various hues flowing into one another only succeeds in bringing to mind the colours in the spectrum and is a reflection of some of the mediocrity in design that is commonly seen on the Nigerian streets with little or no art direction. The local designer needs to ask himself what he's trying to portray in the design and get the right colour or the closest colour which symbolizes his thought. Bearing in mind that the headline is one of the first elements that catches the viewers' attention. There is a need to have a knowledge of colour theory for designing.

Nollywood Photography

Photography is one of the integral element in modern graphics. It is one of the most effective ways of drawing attention to what is being said as well as ensuring that the message is concretized or easily remembered and better understood.



Fig 8: Getting Over Him (2017)

Source: Pulse.ng (2018)

Figure 2.18 (Getting Over Him) depicts a poster with male and female actors displayed in two groups one group comprising of females placed above the male group below with the title of the movie placed between the groups. At first glance one gets the impression of a group of young men and women posing casually for a photograph. The only indication that the poster is for a movie is the title in the middle. This poster can easily be ignored among other poster because there is nothing that grabs attention or make it stand out from other posters. The casual stance of the actors does not in any way indicate or suggest anything is going on in the poster. No hint of what the film is about is clearly indicated in this poster hence nothing to motivate viewers to go to the cinema or buy the movie to watch. The choice of pictures negates the essence of illustration in advertisement which according to Akanni (2012) is to grab attention and establish an immediate connection with their audience. A more explicit picture of perhaps a female (without a smile) backing a male with a look of plea on his face would have done a better job. The result of the given photograph in figure 2.18, is that the semi-literate viewers would get a vivid and comprehensive understanding of the movie through the picture. One of the things that can help to grab attention apart from good photography is the composition of the picture. Which is the conscious arrangement of the various subjects of the photograph to give a visual appeal. Boddy-Evans (2019). Composition involves determining the centre of interest in the photograph and composing the other elements around it. The resultant effect is that the gaze of the viewer will tend to linger over these points of interest. The arrangement is made considering the factors of design which include elements like colour, shape and other factors. The resultant effect is to produce a unified whole subsequently persuading the viewers to go and watch the movie.

Conclusion

This research has looked at the Nollywood posters their mode of designing as compared to their Hollywood counterpart and has come up with the following conclusions. The local Nollywood poster designers are lacking in good layout design with some images being substandard or mediocre without the proper use of colour, typography and photographs. Because posters are the first impression of what the films are all about.

The movie designers would have to improve upon their designs standards and not just design for the sake of it but try to come up with good concepts before designing so as to effectively convey the messages the films are trying to portray.

Recommendations

This study has come up with the following recommendations in other to improve the design standards of the Nollywood posters in Nigeria in particular and the graphic designing in Nigeria in general.

1. The Poster designs made by the graphic designers should be according to the basic principles of graphic designs internationally so they would be up to standard especially as these designs are not restricted to Nigeria alone but seen globally.
2. There should be some sort of guidelines as to what is allowed out in terms of design to the public to help maintain standard. So the movie body should have standards regulations and ethics committee not just for movies but also for the poster designs.
3. The government in the long term should consider setting up institutes that would have all aspects of the creative productions and facilities where the different productions courses are interfaced to give a one-stop shop creative. So that design would meet with international standard.

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