Abuja Resident's Perception of Nollywood Portrayal of African Traditional Religious Practices

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Abstract
The study was carried out to determine the perception of Abuja residents on the portrayals of African traditional religious practices in Nollywood movies. The researcher employed survey research method and simple percentage was used for the analysis. In the survey, a simple size of 400 respondents made up of film viewers were selected through multi-stage sampling in Abuja, the federal capital territory. Findings showed that Nollywood movies portrayal of African traditional religious practices to Abuja residents is not a true reflection of what actually exists in the Nigerian society. Findings also revealed a spectrum of perspectives, ranging from appreciation for the industries efforts to showcase cultural richness to concerns about misrepresentations and perpetuation of stereotypes. The study concludes that influential role of Nollywood in shaping public perception remain critical and the portrayal of local contents should reflect African traditional religious practices. The study recommends guidelines for the portrayals of cultural and religious practices, educational initiatives to enhance cultural awareness, and the ongoing dialogue between to foster a more positive relationship between Nollywood and the community it represents.

Key words: African traditional religious practices, Nollywood movies, audience perceptions, Abuja residents

Introduction

The Nigerian movie industry popularly known as Nollywood has gained international acceptance and recognition since its inception in 1992. Nollywood has contributed hugely to the growth and development of the nation. However, consciously or unconsciously, Nollywood is peddling negative stereotypes of our religion and culture. On the other hand, Nigeria has witnessed a dramatic upsurge of religious intolerance and misinterpretation just like other parts of the world. In other words, both Nollywood and religion are taking Nigeria on a downward spiral with all its attendant negative consequences. By contextualizing the historical significance of Nollywood and religion, this article demonstrates that they could be intentionally positioned to birth growth and development considering their large followership, viewership and practitioners.

Leaning on historical precedence, this article seeks to explore the pitfalls and dangers associated with the misrepresentations peddled by Nollywood and our religious institutions. By situating these issues in a larger historical context, the article argues that it is imperative to review, reassess and reposition Nollywood and religion to produce the much needed development especially in a fast-changing world occasioned by globalization. Why this topic?

The reason is simple: Nollywood and religion both have large viewership and followership; they, therefore, wield tremendous influence on the populace. Nigeria as a nation can leverage on this as its effective utilization would yield great dividends for sustainable national development.

Attention and considerations about the effects of films began many years ago, and are still been revisited by scholars and academics critics due to the changing trends in the portrayal of contents. Semiu and Steve (2012) aver that the earliest coordinated social scientific research or investigation into the perception and harmful effects of film content on societies began in the Western countries of the world. The development of film as a common mass entertainment and information source during the 1950s according to Gunter (1994) encountered similar concerns about growing harms, especially the erosion of cultural, traditional, and religious value systems of societies. These days, many concerns are still being raised about the kinds of values and attitudes that are inculcated by the exposure to certain kinds of film content, especially enculturation, violence, and traditional religion in movies (Kubey and Larson, 2005).

The Nigerian film industry is made up of several segments producing films in different languages. Nollywood, one such segments is situated in predominantly Christian southern Nigeria and produces films primarily in the English language (Jedlowski, 2013). Although Nollywood has been used as a metonym to describe the entire Nigerian film industry (Treichel, 2010) and the entire video film industry (Haynes & Okome, 2013), in this study I adopt Jedlowski's (2013) perspective. My study gives attention to changes in economic activities brought about by an influx of professionally trained filmmakers and renewed state and corporate interest in the industry, focusing on attempts made by President Goodluck Jonathan's administration (2010-2015) to gentrify Nollywood.

The most worrisome concern in the debate about the erosion of film content has been whether or not it promotes wrong perception and behavior among viewers most especially in the developing

societies like Nigeria (Evra 1990). Researchers have also shown that heavy exposure to improper screen content can cause problems in most domains of social behavior. For example, it can make people become both fearful of the world around them and accepting wrong doings in the real life as displayed by others (Semiu and Steve, 2012).

According to Berkoweitz, (2001), cultural erosion is one of the global concerns today in all segments of the world, and home films or movies, being one of the specific learning conditions is believed to be a potential contributor to the continuous erosion of culture and traditional value system in societies. As social science scholars research to determine the major causes of cultural erosions such as social environments, family instructions, and group membership, other members of the societies continue to blame the media of film and movies for increased traditional cultural alienation and attitudinal change in varying societies (Fraser & Staub, 1996).

Nnaji, (2011) opines that movies, generally, provide a special learning format that lead to unusually high retention of factual material, incomparison to the acquisition of facts in standard laboratory memory experiments. What could be inferred here is that movies can be used to acquire information or aid teaching and learning.

In recent times, however, a cursory observation of Nigerian home videos as held in Ikot-Osin, Nwogbo, and Jeremiah (2021) however reveals a common strand that cuts across the conventional genre–the plot. So much intrigue is woven round the plot such that the scenes are predominantly witchcrafts in nature. Plots of people becoming wealthy through fetish means and others fortifying themselves through ritual interplay held sway. Thus, words and speeches of witchcraft or diabolism have gained much entry into the vocabulary of Nigerian home videos, as may be observed in their titles and themes. These features no doubt characterize the average Nigerian home video of today (Afam, 2018).

It's important to note that the portrayal of African traditional religious practices in Nollywood can vary widely, and filmmakers approach these themes in diverse ways.

Notably, one of the issues prevalent in the front burner of discussion is the issue of Religion with particular reference to portraying African traditional religion negatively in movies. African traditional religion is showcased as fetish and barbaric, its practitioners are portrayed as wicked and evil people. Scholars are of the view that there should be a paradigm shift which will give room for balancing of religious characters in movies. As the criticism grows from strength to strength, it is imperative to investigate in order to establish what people feel about Nollywood movies and it's method of portraying the African traditional religious practices with focus on Abuja residents.

Statement of the Problem

There are observations in the public domains that, content of Nollywood movies are highly misrepresented especially in the portrayal of traditional religious practices. There, they are not viewed as living up to their objectives as enshrined in Nigerian policy on film production. This is quite lamented by even those who belong to the industry, as Nollywood filmmaker, Kunle Afolayan in an interview on SKY 452's show "For the Record" with UK-based Nigerian; DJ Abass

(2022) opine that, the Nigerian film industry has grossly misrepresented the African traditional religions and values in films. He cited an example that "some of the chants and the use of it are often misused. When you see a proper *Babalawo*, they say 'oh come on, you don't do this'. The way the shrines is presented; the way the *Babalawos* are presented is misrepresented."

As one may observe, the above is an explanation to the growing criticisms and arguments on the misrepresentation of Nigerian cultural values in its home made videos which is quite unacceptable to the dictates of Nigeria's national policy on film. However, the foregoing cannot be hastily generalized or assumed be to true without empirical evidence, and this calls for an enquiry in the perception of nollywood movies' content and portrayal of religious cultural practices by Nigerian viewers, and thereby gives vent to the question: How do Nigerian viewers perceive the portrayal of African traditional religion in Nigerian films?

It's a fact that equal representation of different religious beliefs will ensure that everyone has the access to a full range of opportunities to achieve their religious goals and objective, as well as the psychological and physical benefits that come from practicing such religion. African traditional religion have been termed to be barbaric and fetish to practice in the society. The rate to which the above statement posits truth is yet to be confirmed by scholars.

Many scholars and experts in the creative industry are of the opinion that African traditional religion should be portrayed in a way that the world should see the positive part the same way other religions are portrayed as lifesaving religions. This study seeks to find out the perception of Abuja residents on how African religious practices are portrayed in media contents with focus on Nollywood movie industry.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

i. To examine the portrayal of African Traditional Religious practice in Nollywood movies
ii. To Determine the extent of the portrayal of African Traditional Religious Practices in Nollywood Movies
iii. To Find out Abuja Residents perception of the portrayal of African Traditional Religious practices Nollywood Movies

Literature Review

African Traditional Religion

In Nigeria, three main religions are recognized: The African Traditional Religion (ATR), Christianity and Islam. ATRs are timeless, beginning with the origin of human civilization on the African continent perhaps as early as 200,000 BCE when the species, Homo sapiens is believed to have emerged (Belz, 2012). Africa, the place of origin of all humans, had various indigenous spiritual systems, usually called ATRs. This was based on the fact that the Africans believed in a Supreme Being who is the creator of the universe. Though various names are given to God in different regions of Africa, the reality which the names express is the same.

African Traditional Religion (ATR) refers to the indigenous or autochthonous religions of the African people. It deals with their cosmology, ritual practices, symbols, arts, society and so on (Olupona, 2014). In the African context, religion is a way of life, therefore it relates to culture and society as they affect the worldview of Africans. Narratives about the creation of the universe (cosmogony) and the nature and structure of the world (cosmology) form the core philosophy of African religions. The narratives are conveyed in a linguistic form that scholars often refer to as myth. The term "Myth" in African religions refers to sacred stories that are believed to be true by the practitioners. The myths reveal significant events and episodes of the most profound and transcendent meaning (Mbiti, 1969).

Myths are not fixed but they retain similar structures and purposes which are to describe the way things were at the beginning of time and to explain the cosmic order. They generally involve superhuman entities, gods, demigods, spirits and ancestors.

The fact that myths have endured for generations gives them their authority and authenticity. Every generation reinterprets the myths to suit its needs and time. The myths provided the African society with unwritten guidelines for establishing institutions of morality, ethics and conduct to foster peace and progress. ATR serves as the structure, around which all other activities such as cultural, economic, political and social organizations are built (Gbenda cited in Mangut & Wuam 2012). Every ethnic group in Africa has developed a complex and distinct set of religious beliefs and practices for centuries which have defied the assault from European and Arabic cultures. Despite their seemingly unrelated aspects, there are common features to these systems practised by the various ethnic groups suggesting that African traditional faiths form a cohesive religious tradition. Evidence such as archaeological discoveries, carbon dating and DNA have corroborated certain elements contained in the African Myths, legends and narratives. These modern forms of dating and verifying information and evidence have confirmed that African oral culture and religion are as authentic as those communicated through writing.

Portrayal and Visualization of Nigeria Traditional Religious Culture in Nollywood Movies

Vision implies the capacity of seeing; being able to know reality by making use of the sense of sight, while 'visuality on the other hand refers to the way in which vision is constructed in various ways' (Gillian, 2006: 6). By 'visual rhetoric of culture' therefore, this study applies the word 'visual' in the context of Morozoff's usage when he states that, 'visual culture is concerned with visual events in which information, meaning, or pleasure is sought by the consumer in an interface with visual technology' (1999, p. 3).

Visual event ipso facto refers to 'the interaction of visual signs, the technology that enables and sustains that sign, and the viewer' (Mirzoeff, ibid: 13). While film narratives are signs that audiences interact with, technology refers to the tool with which films are made or consumed. In this sense film narratives are means of making sense of the social world and sharing the visuals they present to make 'sense' (Turner, 2006: 99) of reality.

Günter and Leeuwem advocate that 'communication requires that participants make their messages understandable in particular contexts. This is the reason why they choose forms of expression

which they believe to be transparent to other participants (Günter and Leeuwem, 1996, p. 40). Hence, to achieve effective communication, every medium depends on some communication models - by this is meant, the conventions through which human beings make their meanings possible. A model is 'a miniature theory of the possible reading of a reality which relates to the basic elements of communication processes that contributes to a better insight of the structure and flow of the processes of communication' (Eilers, 1994, p. 11).

The visual model as applied to this treatise therefore refers to what is represented on screen as Nollywood films. Thus, 'because of a prevalence of iconic signs in visual media such as film, television and photography, these representations of the world can appear so natural that we easily see them as real. In this way, audiences can easily overlook the process of mediation that has occurred in presenting these images to us' (Rayner, Wall, and Kruger, 2001, p. 87). For this reason all audiences enter into the world of 'constructions' to decode meanings of representations in texts. Lacey (1998) suggests that since all media images are representations, one can only fully analyze them by deconstructing the ideological basis of their artifacts as well as the ideological basis of audiences' reading of the artifacts (1998, p.129).

Hence, it is in the context of deconstruction in this study that we apply the phrase 'visual rhetoric' in relation to the fluidity of the many representations and argumentative opinions on the subject of culture in Nollywood and other mainstream cinemas. This view is informed by the fact that the 'visual' is a powerful art of persuasion and rhetoric itself 'is the art of using language to persuade or influence the human subject as applied to persuasive attempts directed to an audience, often in some formal or institutional setting' (Price, 1996, p.248).

Theoretical Framework

Perception Theory

Theories are important elements in any research endeavour as it provides the basis for analysis of the subject-matter. The perception was used as framework for this study. Perception according to Bovee, Thil, Dovel & Wood (1995), is the process of being exposed to a stimulus, paying attention to some degree and then interpreting the received message. Thus, perception involves the process of exposure, attention and interpretation. In other words, for perception to take place, there must be exposure to stimuli with certain level of attention paid to the stimuli and finally, the stimuli are interpreted by the audience (Ezinwa, 2014). Perception theory helps to explain the process by which individual selects, organizes and evaluates stimuli from the environment to provide meaningful experiences for him or her. This means that people focus on certain features of their environment to the exclusion of others. The audience automatically chooses which information to notice and this kind of selection is dependent on different perceptual filters which are based on the consumer's earlier experiences (Smith, 2011, cited in Agbo & Chukwuma, 2015).

The theory provides explanation on why a particular message is perceived differently by the audience. This means that the way a particular audience views a given message may differ from the perception of the message by another audience. This theory is relevant to this study because of the way the audience view or perceive Nollywood films. Each audience or group of audience

comes up with their own interpretation of portrayals of ATRP in Nollywood films. Some may view witchcraft in Nollywood films as good (positive) while some others may perceive them as bad (negative), depending on their level of exposure and knowledge about Nollywood movies and preconceived notions about the subject of ATRP

Methodology

This study employed the descriptive survey research design. Survey research design according to Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekhareafo and Okpanachi (2012, p.107) is "an empirical study that uses questionnaire or interviews to discover descriptive characteristics of a phenomenon". Survey design was used to seek viewers' opinions (perception) on the portrayal of traditional religious practices in Nigerian home video. Thus, adoption of survey design is also because it can be used to study a large population as posed in the population of this study. The sample size for this study is approximately 400. This is drawn from the total population of the study which is three million, six hundred and fifty two thousand (3,652,000) being residents of the Federal Capital territory, Abuja, and derived from the National Bureau of statistics (2022) web data using Taro Yamane's statistical formula. The Taro Yamane's formula was adopted because of its suitability in the calculation of samples sizes from a heterogeneous and finites population as cited in Okwandu, 2004 and Uzoagulu, 1998.

The population of this study was made up of all people that reside in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria comprising the six Municipal area councils which are Abaji, Kuje, Kwali, Abuja Municipal Area Council, Gwagwalada, and Bwari. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2022), the total estimated population of Abuja metro Area stands at 3,652,000. This, constituted the population of the study.

The sampling technique for this study was the multistage sampling. Multistage sampling requires that the researcher should choose samples in stages until he gets the expected sample. In the first stage for the purpose of this study, the purposive sampling was adopted to cluster six area councils of the Federal Capital territory. The clustered areas are Abuja municipal council, Abaji, Gwagwalada, Bwari, Kuje, and Kwali, The areas were selected because they are places with people of diverse cultural and nationalistic background origins and could provide the needed information base on such backgrounds and personal experiences.

In the second stage, stratified sampling was employed. The population was stratified into social groups such as churches, schools, government agencies, business associations groups found in various clustered area councils. Then in the last stage, the population was stratified into male and female groups, so to ensure equal representation in gender. Then, a simple random sampling was used to select the respondents within the selected strata.

After segmenting the area of study, the researcher distributed the sample size of 400 within the clustered areas with four area councils having 67, while two had 66 people to participate as respondents in the study through questionnaire guide. Information collected was synchronized and presented in tabular formats. In addition, the information was expressed in simple percentage scores for appropriate interpretations of result were analyzed in accordance with Yin's (1984)

Explanation Building method and taking into account of research questions raised in the study with analysis of data tied to them.

Table 1: Demographic distribution of respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Sex of Respondents		
Males	122	32%
Females	258	68%
Age of Respondents		
18-25	159	42%
26-35	81	21.3%
35-45	140	37%
Religion of Respondents		
Christianity	198	52.1%
Islam	109	29%
African Traditional Religion	73	19%
Educational Qualification		
FSLC	61	16%
SSCE/GCE	151	40.0%
NCE/OND	115	30.2%
HND/B.Sc.	47	12%
M.Sc. & Others	6	2%
Total	**380**	**100%**

Source: **Field Survey, 2023**

The results above imply that there is a spread in the viewership of Nigerian home videos across sex, religion, age and educational qualification. Significant in the result is the registered response of worshipers of the African Traditional Religion with result also indicating that the much younger age group are more exposed to Nigerian home videos, perhaps due to the proliferation of visual media through the internet. Also, SSCE holders were registered as those that had more time to watch Nollywood movies.

Table 2: Access and Exposure to Nollywood Movies

Response	Frequency	Percentage%
Very high	126	33.2
High	209	55
Can't tell	33	8.7
Low	7	1.8
Very low	5	1.3
Total	**380**	**100**

Source: **Field Survey, 2023**

The data presented in the above table indicated that majority of the respondents have access and exposure to Nollywood movies. This is seen in the response rate of a combined 88.2% who had great access and exposure to Nollywood movies. This implies that the respondents constitute the right demography for the study and their responses invaluable in achieving the research objectives.

Table 3: No Significant Relationship between the Acts and Scenes of ATRP in Nollywood Movies and what goes on in the Society

Response	Frequency	Percentage%
Strongly agree	56	14.7
Agree	89	23.4
Undecided	13	3.4
Disagree	131	34.5
Strongly disagree	91	23.5
Total	**380**	**100**

Source: **Field Survey, 2023**

Table 3 data indicated that majority of the respondents disagree that there is no significant relationship between the acts and scenes of ATRP in Nollywood movies and what actually exists in the society. The implication of this is that the respondents affirmed that the projection and portrayal of ATRP in Nollywood movies is a representation of what is obtained in the society.

Table 4: Portrayal of ATRP in Nollywood Movies is a true Reflection of Life in Nigerian Society

Response	Frequency	Percentage%
Strongly agree	25	6.6
Agree	37	9.7
Undecided	23	6.1
Disagree	113	29.7
Strongly disagree	182	47.9
Total	**380**	**100**

Source: **Field Survey, 2023**

As a follow-up to the question presented in table 2, table 3 sought to ascertain whether the portrayal of ATRP in Nollywood movies is a true reflection of life in Nigerian society. In the table presented above, 6.6% and 9.7% strongly agreed and agreed respectively, while 29.7% and 47.9% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. However, 6.1% were undecided. Thus, majority of the respondents disagreed that portrayal of ATRP in Nollywood movies is not a true representation of what is obtainable in Nigerian society; this might be due to the amount of ruthlessness, embellishment, fakery, fabrication and exaggeration employed for dramatic effects in the movies which might not be the case in reality.

Table 5: Portrayal of ATRP in Nollywood Movies is significantly promoting its existence amongst city Dwellers

Response	Frequency	Percentage%
Strongly agree	117	30.8
Agree	136	35.8
Undecided	21	5.5
Disagree	57	15
Strongly disagree	49	12.9
Total	**380**	**100**

Source: **Field Survey, 2023**

It has been established that the media have the capacity to shape reality by promoting an idea or phenomenon. Obviously, from the majority of the respondents' perception, there is an overwhelming data that point to the fact that continuous portrayal of ATRP in Nollywood movies is significantly promoting and popularising its existence amongst city dwellers.

Table 6: Portrayal of ATRP in Nollywood Movies is merely for Dramatic Purpose and Entertainment

Response	Frequency	Percentage%
Strongly agree	78	20.5
Agree	61	16.1
Undecided	55	14.5
Disagree	87	22.9
Strongly disagree	99	26.1
Total	**380**	**100**

Source: **Field Survey, 2023**

On whether the portrayal of ATRP in Nollywood movies is merely for dramatic purpose and entertainment, there seems to be a sharp difference amongst the respondents on the veracity of the claim. However, while a combined 36.6% agree to that effect, 49% of the respondents disagreed and 14.5% were undecided. The implication of this is that there is a preconceived notion on the part of majority of the respondents that the projection of ATRP has gone beyond dramatic expression and entertainment to subtle or unconscious promotion; perhaps, due to the volume of movies produced on such theme in the last two decades.

Table 7: Portrayal of ATRP in Nollywood Movies has to a large extent increased its Believability amongst city Dwellers

Response	Frequency	Percentage%
Strongly agree	91	23.9
Agree	107	28.2
Undecided	48	12.6
Disagree	79	20.8
Strongly disagree	55	14.5
Total	380	100

Source: **Field Survey, 2023**

Data from table 7 indicated that majority of the respondents affirmed that the portrayal of ATRP in Nollywood movies has to a large extent increased its believability amongst urban area dwellers. This is evident in the percentage of those who agreed (52.1%) as against 35.3% who disagreed,

while 12.6% were undecided. This implies that the projection of ATRP movies from Nollywood has increased its believability amongst city dwellers.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from this study showed that many people still watch Nollywood movies, despite the myriads of movie choices that abound for them in the urban centres and still remains a staple source of entertainment for many Nigerians, despite the availability of Hollywood and Bollywood movies made possible by the internet. This is seen in the rate of respondents (88.2%) who affirmed to that effect. Although, some of the respondents avowed that they do not watch Nollywood movies.

Findings also showed that there seems to be a little bit of controversy surrounding the question of whether the portrayal of ATRP is a true representation of reality of life in Nigerian society. While majority of the respondents (58%) avowed that there is a relationship between the portrayal of ATRP in Nollywood movies and what goes on in the society. Majority (77.6%), however, affirmed that the relationship is not a true reflection of life in Nigeria. The implication of this finding is that Nollywood movies' portrayal of ATRP is an imitation of reality, but the reflection is not a true representation of what actually happens in the society. In other words, the presentation of ATRP by Nollywood is not accurate enough and it has been overstated, exaggerated and fabricated to the desires of the producer and director and not a real reflection of what goes on in the Nigeria society.

This finding mirrors studies by Elegbe (2015), Ukwueze et al (2015) and Ezegwu et al (2016) where they all found that fakery, embellishment and fabrication has dominated the portrayal of witchcraft/voodoism/rituals in Nollywood movies. Apart from the question of whether Nollywood movies portrayal of ATRP is a true representation of reality, findings also show that majority of the respondents (66.6%) believed that the portrayal of ATRP by Nollywood is promoting its existence amongst city dwellers and majority (49%) also affirmed that such projection has gone beyond dramatisation and entertainment purpose to become covert or unconscious promotion of the existence.

However, 36.6% still believed that it is basically for entertainment and dramatic effects and that it has nothing to do with promoting the existence of ATRP. The implication of this is that the Nigerian movies producers need to stop concentrating on themes of witchcraft, voodosim or ritual killings and focus on stories that can project positive image for the nation and promote cultural and traditional values of the Nigerian society as Asemah & Edegoh's (2013) study concluded that Nigerian home videos pay too much attention to ritual activities and that they have negative effect on the image of Nigeria.

Finally, the findings also showed that majority (52.1%) avowed that the believability of ATRP has increased amongst urban area dwellers that constitute the respondents in this study as a result of its portrayal by Nollywood movies. This is seen in the percentage of those who agreed (52.1%) as against 35.3% who disagreed. This is in alignment with the perception theory when Smith (2011) notes that people focus on certain features of their environment to the exclusion of others and

automatically chooses which information to notice and this kind of selection is dependent on different perceptual filters which are based on the consumer's earlier experiences.

Conclusion

The conclusion of the study on Abuja residents' perception of Nollywood's portrayal of African traditional religious practices reveals a nuanced and multifaceted response from the participants. Firstly, it becomes evident that the majority of respondents hold diverse opinions regarding the accuracy and authenticity of Nollywood's depiction of African traditional religious practices. Some participants express satisfaction with the industry's efforts to showcase cultural richness, while others criticize it for perpetuating stereotypes and misrepresentations. The findings underscore the importance of acknowledging the diversity of perspectives within the community.

Furthermore, the study highlights the influence of media on shaping public perceptions and the need for responsible and accurate storytelling, especially when dealing with cultural and religious themes. Participants articulate concerns about the potential impact of misrepresentations on the broader understanding of African traditional religious practices, both locally and internationally. This underscores the responsibility of the Nollywood industry to balance creative expression with cultural sensitivity. Moreover, the study indicates a desire for increased collaboration between filmmakers and cultural experts to ensure a more authentic portrayal of African traditional religious practices. Participants express a willingness to engage in constructive dialogue with the film industry to bridge gaps in understanding and promote accurate representations. This suggests an opportunity for the industry to actively involve the community in the creative process, fostering a more inclusive and respectful portrayal of cultural practices. The study on Abuja residents' perception of Nollywood's portrayal of African traditional religious practices emphasizes the importance of a nuanced and balanced approach in filmmaking. It calls for a collaborative effort between filmmakers, cultural experts, and the community to ensure that Nollywood continues to be a powerful tool for cultural preservation and understanding. The findings underscore the impact of media on shaping perceptions and the responsibility of the film industry to contribute positively to the portrayal of diverse cultural practices

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study on Abuja residents' perception of Nollywood's portrayal of African traditional religious practices, several recommendations emerge to enhance the industry's representation and address concerns raised by the community.

1. There is a clear need for increased collaboration between Nollywood filmmakers and cultural experts. Establishing partnerships with scholars, religious leaders, and community representatives can provide valuable insights into the intricacies of African traditional religious practices, ensuring a more accurate and respectful portrayal. Workshops, seminars, and consultations with these experts can be organized to bridge the gap between filmmakers and cultural authenticity.

2. The study suggests the importance of conducting audience research prior to production. Filmmakers should engage with the community to understand local perspectives, beliefs,

and sensitivities, thereby avoiding potential misrepresentations. This approach can be facilitated through focus group discussions, surveys, or community screenings to gather feedback and adjust storytelling accordingly.

3. The film industry should consider implementing guidelines or codes of ethics for the portrayal of cultural and religious practices. These guidelines can serve as a framework for filmmakers, emphasizing cultural sensitivity, avoiding stereotypes, and ensuring a responsible representation of diverse traditions. Stakeholders in the industry, including production houses and regulatory bodies, can collaborate to establish and enforce these guidelines.

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