

Social Media Marketing in the Yorùbá Video Film Industry

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Abstract

The thrust of this paper is the critical evaluation of the level of acceptance of social media marketing in the Yorùbá film industry. In this age of globalization, many film marketers across the world have abandoned traditional media in favor of online forms of communication, which enable them to share information and get feedbacks from their audience. Based on this premise, it is necessary to investigate the level of acceptance of social media as a channel for film marketing in the fledgling Yorùbá video film industry. Questionnaires were administered to fifty randomly selected marketers in Ibadan and the Lagos metropolis, where there is a high concentration of these video film personnel. The study reveals that due to technology deficiency and lack of interest many marketers have not adopted social media for marketing their film products. The ineffective implementation of the copyright law in Nigeria, which is the major bane of this industry, has also prevented the marketers from adopting the new media. The loose market structure in the industry also deters marketers from maximally utilizing the great potentials social media marketing offers. Recommendations are made for improvement.

Introduction

Existing works on Yorùbá video films have only investigated trends in the development of the industry, narrative techniques and its aesthetics. No work has been done on social media marketing. The aim of this work, therefore, is to fill this gap. As Corrigan observes, “recent decades in film history have been most significantly defined by the reorganization of the film industry in the hands of multimedia conglomerates and the technological expansion of the way movies are exhibited” (1995:67). Social media is categorized as new

media and one of the more recent technological innovations, which employs the Internet for digital broadcasting and communication. These new media are means of mass communication that employ digital technologies which are available on-demand through the Internet and are accessible on any digital device containing interactive user feedback and creative participation. Examples of new media include blogs, online newspapers and the social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube, among others, from which users obtain materials (films, music, news) online via desktop or laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones.

Smartphones are the most frequently used device for social media functions due to their portability and convenience. Just as with other digital devices, there is a kind of digital convergence within smartphones. The features of smartphones include software programs that aid in internet searches, web browsing, downloading and uploading of film and music, camera, camcorder, voice recorder, games, and so on. There are also countless free and paid applications available on smartphones.

With the introduction of social media, online marketing channels have been employed by marketers to market their products, and these marketing channels have consequently eclipsed the older, more traditional forms of marketing. One of the advantages of social media over the old media is the immediacy it offers people to actively follow someone posting content and immediately respond to issues raised.

Over the years, the number of Internet users has increased significantly. This numerical improvement has paved the way for the viability of promoting and marketing films online. Below is the statistics of Internet users between 2005 and 2014:

CHART/DATA	ALL INTERNET USERS	AGE (18- 29)	AGE (30- 49)	AGE (50- 64)	AGE (65+)
2005	8%	9%	7%	6%	1%
2006	16%	49%	8%	4%	1%
2007	26%	65%	22%	10%	5%
2008	29%	67%	25%	11%	7%
2009	46%	76%	48%	24%	13%
2010	61%	86%	61%	47%	26%

2011	64%	87%	68%	49%	29%
2012	66%	86%	72%	50%	34%
2013	72%	89%	78%	60%	43%
2014	74%	89%	82%	65%	49%

Table 1: Demographics of Internet users as of January 2014 (Pew Research Centre).

Presently, film marketers and distributors also use social media to reach several types of audiences with their films, uploaded on platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Afrinolly, among others. Referring to an earlier survey by Razorfish, Qalman noted that seventy-six percent of one thousand people surveyed agreed that they did not mind seeing advertisements on social media websites they accessed, and forty percent of them acted on the advertisement (2009). This figure shows the potentiality of social media in terms of advertisement and promotion of goods and services.

The primary aim of this work is to determine the level of acceptance and deployment of social media for film marketing among the Yorùbá film marketers and promoters since its introduction at the turn of this century. To achieve our objective, a number of research questions were raised to determine: which media Yorùbá marketers employ for marketing and distribution of their films, what knowledge they have of the operations of social media and copyright or anti-piracy laws, and their level of competence on the use of social media. The questions contained in our questionnaire were based on these research questions.

The Yorùbá Video Film Industry: An Overview

The production of Yorùbá video films started in the early 1990s, when the production of celluloid came to an abrupt halt as a result of the economic recession in Nigeria at the time. The history of the development of filmmaking in Nigeria is not complete without reference to the pioneering efforts of Yorùbá theatre practitioners such as Duro Ladipo, Ishola Ogunshola, Moses Olaiya Adejumo, and Ade Afolayan among others, who had abandoned the stage for celluloid film production in the latter part of the 1970s.

Viewing the Yorùbá video industry as an arm of Nollywood, the generic name for Nigerian movies, is a misconception. The Yorùbá video industry according to Alamu is a distinct regional variation of the film industry in Nigeria with its own personnel and audience (2010, 4). It is an ethno-cultural

video industry within a national frame. Though we have Yorùbá actors who at times **cross-over** to act in Nollywood films (especially the films in English), they still belong to either the Association of Nigerian Theatre Practitioners (ANTP) or Theatre and Media Practitioners Association of Nigeria (TAMPAN), the two bodies that regulate the Yorùbá video industry.

The Yorùbá video film industry rarely enjoys government sponsorship. Its development is through the accretion of its personnel and shareholders. The industry has a loose market that gives room for even non-professionals to operate. For instance, one only needs to join one of the two Yorùbá marketers associations to become a qualified marketer.¹

Many Yorùbá video films are made with low-budgets and haphazard processes of pre-production, production and post-production. Films are shot in a period of two weeks and released immediately into the market.² But with this sub-standard practice, producers and marketers still make marginal profits from production and marketing. The reason for this is not far-fetched. The population of the Yorùbá located in six states of Nigeria, which was put at about thirty million as of the 2006 census has been a strong factor for the commercial viability of Yorùbá video production. The fact that the Yorùbá audience also loyally follows the film producers from the theatre to film, makes the film venture profitable. Moreover, film producers have always exploited the fact that most of their audiences are lay audience and artisans, who have little knowledge of film appreciation and content quality and would therefore buy any film released into the market so far their idolized star(s) act(s) in the film and such film reflects what is happening (sociopolitical issues) in the society in which they live.³ Propaganda is also a tool employed by producers and marketers to convince the audience and lure them into buying their films.

In the Yorùbá video industry, marketers dictate the pace and are in complete control of its operations for the simple reason that they produce the funds for production. Producers run to marketers for funds and this encourages the marketers to meddle in the production process, and most times dictate to the producer the kind of film to be produced and their choice of the crew. This corrupt practice has not helped the quality of production.

1 The two market bodies under which the Yoruba marketers operate are: Independent Film and Video Producers and Marketers Association of Nigeria and the Yoruba Film Video Marketers. Members of these bodies are located at Gate and Ogunpa areas of Ibadan metropolis and Idumota market in Lagos.

2 I personally observed this at the shooting location of Moberu (2011), and Dukia (2012), produced and marketed by Albarka, and Tonymax, respectively.

3 The commercial success of most Yoruba video films is as a result of the ability of their producers in employing local themes that appeal especially their lay-audience. Such video resonates with the audience's value system, worldview, and perceptions.

Issues in the New Media and Propaganda Theories

As McQuail noted, the main thrust of media theory is the analysis of how a society is altered by the technical characteristics of the various media it encompasses (1979,5). Media theory examines popular culture as well as the arts, philosophy, journalism, mass media, and individualized media.

New media have traditionally been grouped together under the heading “mass media” and their study developed as a part of the sociology of mass communication. Questions about the effects of the mass media cannot be answered in broad generalities. Scholars have discussed how various types of effects impact various types of people and institutions, at various levels of society, and under various conditions. Mass media vary greatly in content and forms and have wide ranges of activity, which could have effects on society.

Furthermore, McQuail distinguishes between effects and effectiveness of the mass media (1979, 8). While the former is the consequences of mass media operations, the latter, according to him, is the capacity to achieve given objectives, including attracting large audience and influencing opinions and behavior. The effects of mass media occur at different levels: that of the individual, the group, the institution, and society. A further set of distinctions was made by McQuail with reference to the effects of mass media at the aforementioned levels. This relates to the direction of effects and poses the following questions: are the media changing something, preventing something, facilitating something, or reinforcing something? The power of new media as a channel for persuasion and mobilization cannot be overemphasized. With its mass appeal, film also shares some of the properties of new media and is also a propaganda tool.

Propaganda has always been employed to reinforce, influence, and facilitate the emotions of a target audience for a purpose which may be ideological, political or commercial. Garth and O’Donnel perceive it as a deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist (2005, 2). Ellul’s submission further reinforces those of Garth and O’Donnel, as he defines propaganda as a manipulation for the purpose of changing ideas or opinions of people to make them believe some ideas or facts, and finally make them adhere to some doctrines.

Ellul identifies four categories of propaganda (1973, 61). He distinguishes the types of propaganda by the various “political regimes that employ them” and by “their certain internal traits”. The categories are: political and sociological, agitation and integration, vertical and horizontal, and rational and irrational. Ellul further tries to make a distinction between each classification

in the same group, for instance between political and sociological, between agitation and integration and so on. While political propaganda, according to him, involves strategic or tactical techniques of influence employed by a government, a party, an administration, or a special interest group with an aim to change the behavior of the public, sociological propaganda is basically the penetration of an ideology by means of its sociological context.

It can be noted that the functions of all Ellul's classes of propaganda are almost the same. For instance, while they can all be employed for persuasion, their secondary functions are their use to instruct, inform, and mobilize. According to Adú, the primary function of propaganda that involves psychological manipulations to achieve predetermined ends lays the foundation for the effectiveness of other functions (2009, 41). Propaganda is employed to shape opinions and attitudes of people and induce people to change their actions. Thus, in persuasion, the mind, emotion and behavior of the target are influenced.

Mass media are effective tools for the transmission of propaganda. The simultaneity of film and audio-visual properties makes it a more effective tool of propaganda than other media. Movies and human contacts are the best media for sociological propaganda. Film as a medium has been utilized as an instrument of distortion to promote a cause or to tell a story. The documentary films exhibited by the colonial government in Nigeria before independence were used to promote the "values and ideals" of the British government. The resentment of the contents of the films by individuals and concerned organizations later paved the way for indigenous film production around 1945. Advertisement of film on social media is a form of propaganda as it does not only promotes the film but also tries to convince the viewers to purchase the film product.

Methodology

Data was gathered through qualitative interviews with fifty marketers in the Yorùbá video film industry. These film personnel were randomly selected from Ibadan and Lagos metropolis, the two major cities where they are highly concentrated. The main research tool used to elicit information from the respondents was a questionnaire.

The questionnaire is divided into two sections. The first section has five questions that elicit demographic information and the background of respondents. The second part, which has eight questions, focuses on production and the mode or channel of marketing and distributing films. The questionnaire, with its varied question types, both short-answer and open-ended, gave respondents an ample opportunity to bear their minds on the nature

of production and marketing in the Yorùbá video film industry. The questionnaire was conducted in English or Yorùbá, according to the comfort and preference of the respondent. The simple percentage procedure was employed for analysis. The percentages represent the number of respondents who gave each answer as a proportion of the number of respondents who answered the question.

Results and Discussion

The results of the respondents' demographic characteristics which include their age, sex, marital status, profession, and level of education showed that there are more male film marketers than females. While the males constitute eighty-four percent, that is forty-two out of fifty, the females constitute just sixteen percent of the group surveyed. The age distribution shows that the middle-age group, within the age bracket of thirty-five to fifty-five years is the highest represented in the business of film marketing, as ninety-two percent of our respondents fall within this age bracket. The marriage variable shows that there are more married respondents than single ones, as seventy-four percent respondents are married, whereas twenty-six percent are single.

As for the level of education variable, we assumed that the educational level of respondents would show some correlation with their knowledge and use of social media for marketing. The results of the questionnaire reinforced our assumption, as those who had formal education, up to the secondary and tertiary levels, had more knowledge of social media than those who had primary education or no formal education at all. Of the respondents, thirty-eight percent can comfortably use social media, eighteen percent have little knowledge of it and forty-four percent have no knowledge of it all. This is represented in Table 2 below:

Do you have any knowledge of Social Media Marketing?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	No of respondents
Yes	38%	19
No	44%	22
Little Knowledge	18%	9
Total	100%	50

Table 2: Number of respondents who have or do not have knowledge of social media marketing.

The question on profession of respondents was intended to establish if all the respondents were Yorùbá film marketers. All of the respondents claim to be marketers. But, when we came to the question of who provides the funds for the production of the films they market, the result reinforces our earlier discussion on the control being exercised by the marketers over the producers. Buttressing this point, Mr. Gbadebo Lamidi, a marketer with Great Lukad Investment Ltd. claims that:

At times, producers run to us (marketers) to finance the production of their films and since we are marketers we feel obliged to also market such films after production for the reasons that marketing is our primary business, and we believe we can market such films better especially the ones with good stories. Since we provide the funds also we feel we can contribute by suggesting the kind of stories that will sell and the kind of actors that the audience are familiar with and will buy such films once they see their idolized actor (s) in them. We have to protect our investment.

While seventy-six percent of respondents declare that they provide funds for production and also market the finished products, only twenty-four percent concentrate on marketing and are not involved in film production.

Marketing and Distribution

Our survey on the media of marketing and distributing of films revealed that thirty-eight percent of respondents make use of social media for marketing their products. Of the respondents, sixty-two percent have not adopted the use of social media and they still rely on the old media. Respondents gave two reasons for this. First, the majority of those who have not used social media are technologically deficient and have little or no knowledge of the functions of the social media (see Table 2 above). Secondly, this group lacks interest in the use of social media and has refused to change from old media, which they claim to be comfortable with. Only 16.1 percent of the non-users have strong reasons for not using social media. This group observes that since Nigeria has no strong laws against copyright infringement, it would pose a great risk to embrace social media given the large scale of difficulties faced by rights-owners on the Internet. However, 41 percent of the respondents who have not embraced social media for marketing agree to make use of it once the government creates the necessary awareness and effectively regulates the industry.

Concerning the fact that some of their films were uploaded to social media despite their claims of having no knowledge of its functions, 62 percent of respondents claim the films were illegally uploaded without their consent and

no compensation was provided. Akeem Balógun, director of Olasco Films Nigeria Limited, a marketing outfit, reacted this way when asked who uploads his films to social media:

Uploading some of the films my company produce and market are illegally done by people we cannot identify. You just wake up to see that a film you have just pushed to the market has been uploaded on social media. This affects our business and limits recouping our investment.

Of the nineteen respondents who claim to use social media for marketing, six fail to list social media outlets they use. The assumption here is that the marketers may not really have the basic knowledge of social media and its functions, despite claiming otherwise. The outlets used by the remaining respondents include YouTube, Snapchat, Afrinolly, Facebook, Instagram, and Iroko TV. The graph below represents the outlets from most to least used.

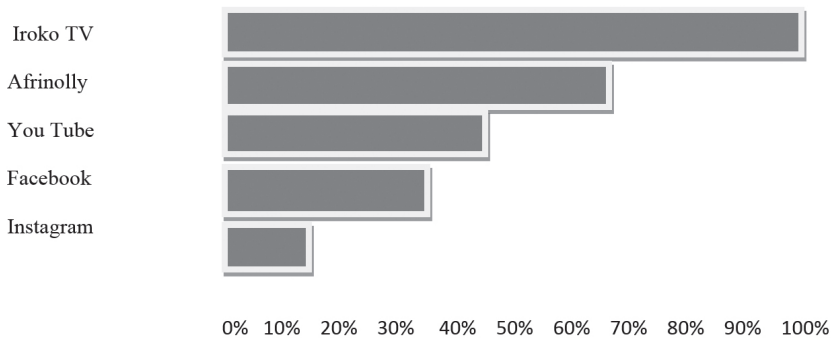


Chart 1: Social Media outlets used by participants from the mostly used to the least used.

From our observations, we also discovered that the most common social media employed for marketing is Iroko TV.⁴ All marketers who have embraced social media advertise their films on Iroko TV. Nine use Afrinolly, six employ YouTube, five use Facebook and two employ Instagram. None of the marketers makes use of Twitter or Snapchat for advertising. The

⁴ From the Iroko Tv media package, we gather that it is perhaps the most successfully patronized online film outlet with an on-demand online streaming service for Nigerian movies. It has a library of about five thousand licensed movies and a global audience of over four million users from one hundred and seventy-eight countries. It is YouTube's biggest partner in Africa and it is copyright-controlled. From subscriptions, the company generates funds for sharing between the company and producers.

result shows there is gradual awareness of social media marketing among the Yorùbá film marketers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This work has been able to identify social media as a potential platform for showcasing and projecting Yorùbá movies globally to the yearning African audience both in the diaspora and at home. With its growing influence, social media has opened up enormous space for Yorùbá film producers and marketers to showcase their creative expressions.

Our survey reveals that majority of the video marketers are yet to embrace social media marketing for their products. This is based on the premise that they are technology deficient and have no knowledge of how social media functions. As well, the minority, which has embraced social media is not adequately remunerated. This is reflected in their observation that subscription to Internet Service Providers (ISPs) among Yorùbá audiences is relatively low since the majority of viewers, prefer to use free sites to download films.

The ineffectiveness of Nigerian copyright laws is another factor for the disinterest shown by the marketers for social media marketing. Large scale piracy in Nigeria's entertainment industry, which has not seen serious intervention from the government, not even within traditional media has greatly discouraged many marketers from embracing social media. They feel that if the government cannot curb piracy with the use of traditional media for marketing, then a lot of their investment will be lost through social media given the large scale of the Internet and the speed of reproduction of materials it offers.

Recommendations

In the light of the foregoing, here are a few suggestions for further consideration:

- a. Given the diffusion advantage social media offers, which is more than that of traditional media, Yorùbá film marketers are encouraged to accept new media to market and distribute their products.
- b. The Nigerian government should introduce stronger laws against copyright infringements and compel ISPs and social media sites to embrace these laws. With this, copyright-controlled ISPs and social media sites will be able to compel audiences to subscribe to watch and download movies.
- c. Government should organize a workshop for film producers, marketers and other stakeholders to sensitize them on the intricacies and functions of social media. The workshop should also focus on digital

- rights management systems such as subscription-based delivery and the video-on-demand, to inform them on the essentials of the operations of social media, the Internet, and how to recoup investments.
- d. Marketers in the Yorùbá film industry should operate under one umbrella and professionalize their activities according to the global standard service. When legally formed, this body will be able to map out strategies to legally fight against piracy. Our observation is that the existing free market structure in the Yorùbá film industry is not resourceful enough to enable marketers to maximally utilize the great potentials which social media marketing offers.
 - e. The Nigerian government should assume its responsibility of addressing the difficulties faced by rights-holders, just as other countries do. For instance, in June 2007, the Brussels Court of First Instance ruled that a Belgian ISP called Scarlet was under an obligation to both block the accounts of offending users and implement a mechanism to filter out infringing content. Also in France, in November 2007, President Sarkozy announced a pioneering entente between French ISPs and content owners, based on a system of warnings leading to disconnection of persistently infringing users. These are the kind of interventions the Nigerian government could embark upon to sanitize the use of social media and encourage content owners.

Based on the above recommendations, we strongly believe Yorùbá films would surpass their local relevance and realize the possibility of attaining global competitiveness and acceptance if our recommendations are implemented.

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