PERCEPTION OF MOVIE AUDIENCE ON THE PORTRAYAL OF NORTHERNERS IN NOLLYWOOD MOVIES

By

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Abstract

The massive visibility and exposure being enjoyed by Nollywood has brought about commercial breakthroughs and acceptance within the country and around the world. It has also flashed a floodlight on certain issues bothering the buoyant industry as there are misconceptions and gaps in knowledge that have led to various studies about its form and content. This study is particularly concerned with interrogating the perception of audience in Plateau state, concerning the portrayal of Northerners in Nollywood movies. The study is anchored on the cultural studies theory. The methodology adopted was the survey method, a quantitative based approach was employed, using both primary and secondary sources of data. Using the non-probability approach, the river convenience sampling technique was used to gather data. A twelve-item online questionnaire was shared to four hundred respondents within the three senatorial zones. Simple percentages and frequency counts were used for data interpretation. It was concluded that the roles given to Northerners in Nollywood movies are often poor, denigrating and negatively stereotyped. The major recommendation is that similar studies should be carried out concerning the misrepresentation and stereotyping of other marginalized groups within Nollywood itself, as well as other genres of entertainment such as music and sports.

Keywords: Kannywood, Northerners, Misrepresentation, Nollywood, Stereotypes

Introduction

Since the emergence of Nigeria's home video industry in the early nineties, the industry has grown in leaps and bounds. Ibbi (2017) confirms that the Nigerian film industry has grown into the largest in Africa and one of the three largest in the world. Haynes (2005), as cited in Onuzulike, 2009) explains that the name "Nollywood" which is presently used as a moniker for the Nigerian movie industry was invented by a non-native. It is also said to have first appeared in an article by Matt Steinglass of the *The New York Times* in 2002, and is still being "imposed" by non-natives to Nigeria. The massive visibility and exposure being enjoyed by Nollywood in the twenty-first century has not only brought about commercial breakthroughs and acceptance within the country, the continent, and around the world, it has also flashed a floodlight on certain issues within the ever growing industry. Salaudeen (2019), argues that Nigeria's movie industry is famous for propagating stereotypes. Movie plots are easily predictable based on the gender or ethnicity of the protagonist. For instance, while the Yoruba woman is more likely to be involved in *juju* on the one hand, the gateman on the other hand is most likely a Hausa man (A Northerner).

The typical argument about the stereotypic African scenario is often about foreigners (Europeans and Americans) with the wrong view about what it takes to be an African in general, or Nigerian in particular. For instance, Chimamanda Adichie's 2009 TED Talk titled: "The Danger of a Single Story," like some critics and scholars before her, goes against the promoting and perpetuating of the proverbial "single story" about Africa by western literature. It can however be argued that another angle to these stereotypes lie in scenarios where an insider (average African or Nigerian) forms an oversimplified view about a particular culture, religion, ethnicity, language or even people from a

different geographic location within the continent or country. It is therefore not surprising that different groups (ethnic, religious and cultural) tend to suspiciously view each other through the lenses of their preconceived stereotypes. Salaudeen (2019), is of the view that these stereotypes are sometimes a product of the profound misunderstanding and mistrust among Nigeria's many tribes. Brooks (2018, p. 22) explains that, "unsurprisingly, many people exhibit limited thinking when they have a lack of knowledge. In fact, we can all be guilty of stereotyping and wrongfully characterizing people and things with which we are unfamiliar." It can therefore be argued that Nigeria is a country with such diverse ethnic groups and cultures that it is almost impossible to have a full understanding of all of them, it is also possible that this scenario has created a fertile ground for unfounded stereotypes which have also found their way into Nollywood storylines, influencing and restricting the roles played by actors from marginalized backgrounds within the industry. Another angle to this is that not all stereotypes are as a result of ignorance or a lack of knowledge and understanding. It is worthy of note to state here that there is a strong possibility that some of the stereotypes that restrict Northerners to denigrating roles in Nollywood movies are not the result of an accident, as they are probably fuelled by wide cultural and religious differences, poor tribal relations, as well as the lingering mutual regional distrust that reared its ugly head after the Nigerian civil war.

Adichie (2009) puts up an argument that goes as follows, "the single story creates stereotypes and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete; they make one story become the only story." While Adichie's argument concerns the stereotyped portrayal of Africa and Africans by western literature, it can be argued here that the same can be said about Nollywood and the portrayal of certain marginalized groups, for it is quite true that the danger of the "single story" in Nollywood and even beyond, cannot be overemphasized. It can also be argued that the gender, ethnicity and religion of the actor seem to have an influence on the type of role they are likely to be given in a Nollywood movie. "Nollywood wields a powerful influence that is often a determinant of audience behaviour, as audience watch the content portrayed on the screens, internalize it and accept it as a representation of reality (Beyioku-Alase, 2019, as cited in *Inclusive News Network*, 2021, para. 11)." Therefore, this paper seeks to flash a flood-light on the perceptions of audience in Plateau State concerning the portrayal of Northerners in Nollywood movies.

Statement of Problem

The massive visibility and exposure being enjoyed by Nollywood in the 21st century has not only brought about commercial breakthroughs and acceptance within the country and around the world, it has also flashed a floodlight on certain issues within the ever-growing industry. Geiger (2012) explains that what makes Nollywood movies 'worthy' of close analysis is that in their ideological diversity and often conflicting messages regarding political action and the legacies of colonialism, most Nollywood movies would seem to counter the political and aesthetic sensibilities demanded of postcolonial African film. The argument here is that Nollywood seems to be holding on to certain ideologies, which do not meet up with the modern day postcolonial ideologies expected of an industry of its stature. For instance, in an age were pluralism is one of the over-riding ideologies, it is a paradox to find that issues concerning the non-inclusive nature of the industry in certain quarters are a common occurrence, especially when the country in question is made up of a predominantly single race like Nigeria.

There have been misconceptions and gaps in knowledge that have led to various studies concerning the gender stereotyping of roles in Nollywood, studies have also been carried out on the influence of Nollywood on African culture (to mention just a few areas that have attracted the attention of researchers). However, issues concerning the representation and misrepresentation of underrepresented and marginalized groups within the industry are presently a very fertile area for academic research due to the very few attempts made by previous scholars, as well as the scarcity of published literature on the subject. This study is particularly concerned with interrogating the perception of Nollywood audience in Plateau State concerning the portrayal of Northerners in Nollywood movies. the question that begs for answers is whether Nollywood's portrayal of Northerners can be considered a positive stereotype. Providing answers to this question forms the overriding concern of this study.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the research objectives that guided the study:

1. Evaluate the portrayal of Northerners in Nollywood movies.
2. Evaluate how the audience in Plateau State perceive the portrayal of Northerners in Nollywood movies.
3. Determine if the portrayal of Northerners in Nollywood movies can be regarded as a positive or negative stereotype.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions that guided the study:

1. How does Nollywood portray Northerners in its movies?
2. How do the Audience in Plateau State perceive the portrayal of Northerners in Nollywood movies?
3. Can Nollywood's portrayal of Northerners be considered a positive stereotype?

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the 'cultural studies theory.' Cultural studies as a field of study was initially developed by British Marxist academics, and has been subsequently taken up by scholars from many different disciplines around the world. West and Turner (2010, p. 392), explain that "cultural studies has its background and its beginnings in Britain, although the United States has also taken a lead in understanding cultural studies (e.g., Grossberg, 1997)." "Cultural studies can be understood as an interdisciplinary or post-disciplinary field of inquiry that explores the production and inculcation of culture or maps of meaning, (Barker, 2004, p. 42)." West and Turner (2010, p. 395) argue that "to a great extent, cultural practices and institutions permeate our ideologies. We cannot escape the cultural reality that, as a global community, actions are not performed in a vacuum."

Murdock (1989, p. 436 as cited in West & Turner 2010) emphasizes the pervasiveness of culture by noting that "all groups are constantly engaged in creating and remaking meaning systems and embodying these meanings in expressive forms, social practices, and institutions." Barker (2004, p. 43) shares a similar view, he argues that "cultural studies is concerned with those practices, institutions and systems of classification that enable a population to acquire particular values, believes, competencies, and routines of life. Further, cultural studies seeks to develop ways of thinking about culture and power that can be utilized by agents in the pursuit of change."

The struggle for meaning, interpretation, identity, and control by institutions, in this case within the Nigerian movie industry (Nollywood) which is an expressive form, falls under the realm and domain of cultural studies. The argument which states that the media can by and largely shape our culture through the creation of meaning and identity cannot be over-emphasized, it is however important for us to find ways of thinking, through which the pursuit of change can be furthered. It can be argued that Nollywood in particular, and the media at large, have the power to shape the perception of the audience through their portrayal of certain groups and individuals, thereby influencing the way they are viewed. In other words, it can be argued that a certain degree of exposure to Nollywood movies can potentially influence the values and believes of the general population over time, thereby influencing their perception about groups and individuals, be it intentionally or unintentionally.

Review of Related Literature

The quadrupedal legs of Non-inclusiveness in Nollywood

   i.   **The Ethnic and Cultural angle**

One of the very worrying quadrupedal legs of non-inclusiveness in Nollywood is that which has taken the dimension of an ethnic as well as cultural representation angle. According to Onuzulike (2009), Nigerian video films are deeply rooted in Nigerian cultural traditions and social texts that focus on Nigerian community life. Nigerian video film stories are told using African idioms, proverbs, costumes, artifacts, the imagery of Africa and cultural displays. Orewere (1992, p. 206), explains that "we are often reminded that film is a powerful medium of entertainment and the transmission of cultural values." Onyemobi (2021, as cited in *Inclusive News Network*, 2021) also holds the same view, and argues that cultural norms as well as social norms affect the way people interpret reality and perceive certain groups of people in every society. It can therefore be argued that cultural norms, social norms as well as cultural values generally influence the portrayal of marginalized groups and individuals in certain ways, while subsequently leading to the creation of new stereotypes or at least to the reinforcement of existing ones.

Bleach (2003, as cited in Ibbi, 2017) confirms that Nigeria is a multi-ethnic country with over a hundred tribes, each with a distinct language and culture, different from the other. Nigeria is the third most ethnically and linguistically diverse country in the world, after New Guinea and Indonesia. It is therefore not surprising that issues of ethnicity and culture have presently risen to the surface of our daily lives, it is also true that these issues can neither be ignored nor overstated. According to Edewor et al. (2014, p. 70) "the vilification of ethnicity as the scapegoat of all vices associated with the Nigerian body polity has made the subject a dominant theme…" It can easily be argued that due to its heterogeneous nature, ethnic and cultural factors have always played one role or the other in determining how Nigeria is viewed locally and internationally, it is also true that the same can be said about Nollywood. This has also stressed the need for more ethnic and cultural inclusiveness within the movie industry. Salaudeen (2019), argues that tribal relations failed to fully heal after the civil war in the late 1960's, and today, certain parts of the country still suffer from violent flash points with tribal inclinations. If the feeling of national identity is being threatened by an increasing cultural diversity, what can a nation-state like Nigeria (which is a good example of a society in which cultural divisions appear especially implacable) do? (Edewor, et al., 2014). One answer that seems very fitting to this pressing question is that of ethnic and cultural integration through our institutions. For instance, the entertainment

industry which has music, sports and the film industry as strong instruments within its domain, can be an ingredient for fostering unity in diversity, cultural integration, and homogeneity in the midst of our glaring cultural diversities, if properly harnessed.

Udormisor and Sonuga (2012) confirm that through films and videos, the cultural background and identity of a nation can be exhibited to the outside world. Over the years, there has been a propagation of indigenous films and home videos in Nigeria. However, the big question is do indigenous films and home videos reflect and propagate ethnic and cultural hybridity, or do they further widen the existing gaps? It is worthy of note to state here that the issue of ethnic and cultural heterogeneity are a double edged sword (a gift and a curse) depending on how well their powers are channeled. It must be said here that the best way to channel these powers is through ethnic integration, cultural integration, as well as ethnic and cultural inclusion within the movie industry, as well as the society at large.

ii.   The Religious angle

Another quadrupedal leg of the non-inclusive nature of Nollywood comes from the fact that the two major religions (Christianity and Islam) have ideologies that are poles apart. It can be said that the divergent ideologies between the Christian dominated South and the Muslim dominated North has played a part in reducing the potentials for collaborations between actors, film makers, producers and directors from the two sides of the divide. Adesokan (2006, as cited in Ibrahim, 2019, p. 82) argues that when people talk about such a thing as a Nigerian film, "[they] usually turn a blind eye on the films made in the Hausa language in and around the northern city of Kano, which are Nigerian but still very different." It can be argued that Kannywood which is based in the North has been isolated from the influence of Nollywood and vice versa, and this could be the result of ideological differences that stem from religious differences amongst other issues. For instance, Ibrahim (2019, p. 82) argues that "there is also the absence of available cinema and refusal to go to the very few existing ones for reasons associated with *religion* (emphasis intended) culture and, perhaps, economics." Religion can therefore be termed an issue affecting the penetration of Northern actors into Nollywood, which in the long run influences the characterization of the few Northerners that manage to cross the line between Nollywood and Kannywood.

iii.   The regional angle

One of the quadrupedal legs of non-inclusiveness in Nollywood comes from the fact that Nigeria is basically divided into two regions (Northern and Southern), there are also geopolitical sub regions that fall under each of the two large regions. It is worth noting here that there have been long drawn, well-marked, ethnic, cultural and religious differences within these lines, not to mention the complex ideological differences that permeate all spheres of life. According to Shehu (2020, p. 39), "filmmaking in Nigeria is divided largely along regional, and marginally ethnic and religious lines. Thus, there are distinct film industries – each seeking to portray the concern of the particular section and ethnicity it represents." It can easily be argued that Nollywood which represents the Southern region of the film industry seems to be the more vibrant section of the industry, when compared to Kannywood which is more or less an extension of the Northern region. Ibrahim (2019, p. 82) argues that "Nollywood and Kannywood are,

arguably, the two major, distinct cinemas in Nigeria. On the one hand, Nollywood is based in the south and produces films mainly in English with Christianity and mostly Western-influenced motifs as themes.

On the other hand, Kannywood films are almost exclusively in the Hausa language." The sharp differences that characterize each of these regions as well as geopolitical zones only make it harder for an actor from a different zone, especially from the more conservative Kannywood based up North, to break through all the barriers that more often than not, act as a glass ceiling against such a cross over. It can therefore be argued that regional disparities have played a role in propagating the non-inclusive tendencies within Nollywood. It is also possible that the non-inclusive nature of the industry is partly reflected through a stereotyped portrayal and characterization of Northerners in Nollywood movies.

iv. The Gender and LGBTQ angle

The issue of gender has been one that has drawn many commentaries in the media. Rights groups and feminists have decried the level of negative representation of women in the mass media (Ibbi, 2017). It can be further argued that when issues of representation or misrepresentation arise, it is most often from the angle of gender, sexuality as well as sexual orientation, of which women are often counted among the big losers. It can be said that the portrayal of these three issues by the media (specifically the movie industry) has a ripple effect on how the audience perceive marginalized groups within the industry, which in turn has an effect on the break out potentials of women, as well as the LGBTQ (those with abstract sexual orientations) in the industry. According to Media Awareness Network (2008, as cited in Dunu et al. 2015, p. 100) "female stereotyping in the media can narrow the perception of what women can do and not do and shape men and children's view of women." Ibbi (2017) argues that societies within Nigeria are structured along patriarchal lines in the sense that the girl child is seen as lesser than a man, hence, there are certain societal roles that they are forbidden from participating in. This line of thought is reflected in the type of roles that women are given in movies in the country. It can be further argued that the portrayal of women and maybe marginalized groups such as the LGBTQ, as well as the physically challenged in demeaning ways, more often than not shape the views of the audience concerning such groups. It is therefore not surprising to hear the growing voices of scholars, activists and rights groups seeking a change in the way these groups are portrayed (misrepresented), as well as call for their integration within the industry and mainstream society.

Okpadah (2020, p. 107) explains that "as societies expand, as the world converge, as new cultures emerge, as the postnormal becomes normal, as old traditions give way to new trends to thrive, Nigerian societies still remain poised in their subjugation of homosexuality and new sexual orientations. Religion and indigenous cultural beliefs are also instrumental to the prevalent critical perception of gayism." It can be argued that both Nollywood and the Nigerian society at large have subjugated homosexuals as well as people with abstract sexual orientations to the fringes of society. While it can be said that the portrayal (negative or positive) of homosexuals in Nollywood movies is nothing to write home about, another angle comes from the fact that LGBTQ behaviours have been constitutionally criminalized, leaving individuals with such inclinations with no other choice but to hide their sexual orientation, for the fear of being black-balled within the industry and even society at large. For these reasons, there are hardly any openly homosexual or gay actors in Nollywood. Nwangwu (2022) explains that Nollywood has occasionally done the job of touching on various subjects, but it has failed woefully when it comes to the LGBTQ community. While this

has no clearly observable effect on the portrayal of Northerners in Nollywood movies, and it cannot be termed an issue affecting the penetration of Northern actors into Nollywood, it is still one of the quadrupedal legs of non-inclusion since it is a problem that affects marginalized groups within the movie industry.

Sheidu et al. (2022, p. 76) explain that "right now, the world is confronted with clashing belief systems regarding what the ideal human sexuality ought to be. From a global dichotomy, this has brought forth two kinds of societies, to be specific: (1) gay tolerant societies and (2) homophobic stereotypic societies." Nwangwu (2022) confirms that Queerness has been demonized to a point where it is seen as a choice or a bad habit rather than a biological trait or feature. It can easily be argued that Nigeria falls under the grouping of homophobic stereotypic societies due to the homophobic nature of its laws, culture, values and norms, which have sidelined and marginalized homosexuals within the movie industry as well as mainstream society.

Breaking the mould of Stereotypes and Misrepresentation

According to Nwangwu (2022), movies are popular for mirroring society, feeding off the fear that engulfs us and teaching us life lessons. Ali (2004) explains that Nigerians need films and drama that will project our culture. We also need artistic projects that will present the facts instead of a distorted reality. It is therefore worthy of note to state here that movies in general, whether Nollywood, Hollywood, or Bollywood, have the potential to distort perceptions of reality. Sheidu et al. (2022) argue that the media occupy a central position in shaping the ideology that determines the socio-cultural reality in society. This role is pivotal to the survival and extension of beliefs, ideas and practices. Buckingham (2003, p. 57 as cited in Ibbi, 2017) argues that "the media do not offer us a transparent window on the world but a mediated version of the world. They don't just present reality, they re-present it." It can therefore be argued that the media possess the power to plant images and ideas in our heads through their portrayal of certain individuals and groups in certain ways, in essence our socio-cultural realities are more often than not, shaped by the media. This also means that the media can mould beliefs, ideas and practices through the misrepresentation of groups within society, especially the marginalized ones. Abodunrin and Akinola (2019) **argue that opinions are often formed through biases that are a product of truths or stereotypes. It is believed that in Sub-Saharan Africa, Nollywood has become a leader in instigating a cultural shift from historical and written facts to visual images. It is therefore not surprising that Nollywood has a huge influence on the opinions of its audience, as well as their perceptions of reality to some extent, as seen through the cultural shift it is presently fuelling in Nigeria and the continent at large. Nollywood at present, seems to be pushing the envelope when it comes to influencing the opinions of its audience, and this can be measured through its propagation of truths on one hand and stereotypes on the other hand. It can be argued further that this is probably because it employs moving pictures and sounds in its movies, making it a much more effective means of influencing the views and beliefs of its audience.**

Abodunrin and Akinola (2019, p. 2), explain that "varying categories of reviews have welcomed the emergence of Nigeria's Nollywood films, a number of which are misunderstood or outright misinformed perceptions of its form and contents. An editorial in the print edition of *The Economist* (2017), reported that a chunk of these perceptions are disturbingly now touted and believed by fellow Africans." It can be argued further, that there have been misinformed perceptions about the content and form of Nollywood movies, both here at home and abroad.

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However, it can still be argued that the industry has displayed a tendency to propagate and reinforce certain stereotypes through its form and content, and stereotypes as usual, have the potential to influence audience perception in more ways than one. While the content and storyline of a movie both play a very important role, the context in which they play such roles can surely shape the behaviours of the audience. Adichie (2009), argues in her TED Talk "The Danger of a Single Story" that "to create a single story, show people as one thing, as only one thing over and over again, and that is what they become." Branston and Stafford (2006 as cited in Ibbi, 2017), argue that stereotyping has been a key concept in media studies, and is now perhaps too taken for granted. Many mistakes are made in using the term, which does not describe people or characters. It is easy to associate a particular character in a movie with a role that suites his personality in a movie. People find it difficult to distinguish between reality and fiction. Mohammed (2019, as cited in Ngbokai, 2019) argues that the Nigerian media has assisted in the negative stereotyping of Northerners who are always seen as 'Maiguard', 'Maisuya', 'Maitsire 'or as the rich potbellied 'Alhaji' sleeping around with southern girls while his many wives are very invisible and all while speaking the most outrageous English. Though it is possible that some Northerners may engage in any of the above mentioned activities or possess some of these qualities in reality, it is wrong for the media in general and Nollywood movies in particular to paint a picture that portrays Northerners partaking in these activities or possessing these qualities over and over again, making it seem like they cannot be anything else in reality. Such portrayals call for a paradigm shift, and a change in approach as far as the portrayal of Northerners by Nollywood goes, especially when taking note of the fact that the audience of Nollywood movies are likely to internalize and accept almost everything they see on the movie screen as a representation of reality

Despite the fact that the media play a huge role in shaping perceptions of the audience, especially when it concerns marginalized and repressed groups, the voices of scholars, activists and rights groups seeking a change in the way certain groups are portrayed (misrepresented) must be loud and clear on the issues of misrepresentation and stereotyping, as advocacy remains the surest way to break the mould of misrepresentation and stereotyping in Nollywood. It must be added that the blame does not totally stop with the media, though Mohammed (2019, as cited in Ngbokai, 2019) blames Kannywood (the Northern section of the industry) for complicity in spurring misrepresentation while doing nothing to alleviate or counter the negative representations with their dominant storylines of courtship, marriage, dancing among trees or village miscreants. On the other hand, Salaudeen (2019), explains that things may be changing within the industry. In the last decade or thereabouts, a generation of Nigerian filmmakers focused on producing better-quality films and crucially, more representative films have emerged. Films like 'Lion Heart', 'Chief Daddy', and 'Up North' deliberately show less represented elements of different Nigerian cultures, breaking away from previous film clichés.

Research Method

The study employs the quantitative research method, while using the non-probability approach, it specifically adopts the river convenience sampling technique to sample respondents from the three senatorial zones of the state. Plateau state has a population of over 100,000, therefore a sample size for populations of over 100,000 was reached using figures from published tables showing 400 or more obtained responses as appropriate for this type of study (Israel, 2003). The research instrument was a 12-item questionnaire designed to collect data from respondents. The questionnaire was created using Google forms, an online survey tool. The questionnaires were electronically shared

to respondents through hyperlinks on WhatsApp channels, such as groups and private accounts. In order to gain more insights on the results, the study used simple percentages and frequency counts to interpret all the relevant findings. The study therefore employed both primary and secondary sources of data, with the aim of achieving the objectives of the study.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Demographic Information

S/N	Characteristics		Frequency	Percentages (%)
1	Gender	Male	180	45
		Female	216	54
		Others	4	1
TOTAL			**400**	**100**
2	Age-Range	18-27	68	17
		28-37	212	53
		38-47	60	15
		48-57	20	5
		58 years and above	40	10
TOTAL			**400**	**100**
3	Location	Plateau North	216	54
		Plateau Central	96	24
		Plateau South	88	22
TOTAL			**400**	**100**
4	Occupation	Civil Servant	92	23
		Trader	24	6
		Banker	24	6

		Farmer	36	9
		Others	224	56
TOTAL			**400**	**100**

Source: Field Work, 2022

Table 1 shows that a significant portion (54%) of the respondents were females, while another significant portion (45%) of the respondents were males. A very small portion (1%) of the respondents indicated their gender as others. This implies that female respondents were the dominant gender in this study.

Table 1 also shows the age-range of the respondents. An overwhelmingly significant portion (53%) of the respondents were between the age-range of 28 to 37 years of age, while 17% of the respondents were between the age-range of 18 to 27 years of age. The table also shows that 15% of the respondents were between the age-range of 38 to 47 years of age, a small portion (10%) of the respondents were 58 years and above, while the smallest portion (5%) of respondents were between the age-range of 48 to 57 years of age. The results imply that more than half of the respondents in this study were youths.

Table 1 shows the location of the respondents in the study. An overwhelming significant portion (54%) of the respondents were from the northern senatorial zone of the state. A less significant portion (24%) of the respondents were from the central senatorial zone of the state, while that smallest portion (22%) of the respondents in the study were from the southern zone of the state. The results imply that an overwhelming portion of the respondents in this study were from the northern senatorial zone of the state.

Table 1 shows the occupation of the respondents. An overwhelming significant portion (56%) of the audience indicated their occupation as others, another significant portion (23%) of the respondents were civil servants. A less significant portion (9%) of the respondents were farmers, a much less significant portion (6%) of the respondents were traders, while an equally less significant portion (6%) of the respondents were bankers. The results imply that an overwhelming portion of the respondents in this study were those who indicated their occupation as others.

Table 2: Frequency of Nollywood Movie Viewership

S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentages (%)
1	Very Often	44	11
2	Often	166	41.5
3	Not Very Often	168	42
4	Rarely	22	5.5
	TOTAL	**400**	**100**

Source: Field Work, 2022

Table 2 reveals that a significant portion (42%) of the respondents watched Nollywood movies, though not very often, while another significant portion (41.5%) watched Nollywood movies often. A less significant portion (11%) of respondents watched Nollywood movies very often, while 5.5% of the respondents rarely watched Nollywood movies. It implies that a significant portion (52.5%) of the respondent watched Nollywood movies either often or very often.

Table 3: Perception of the roles given to Northerners in Nollywood

S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentages (%)
1	Good	24	6
2	Bad	264	66
3	Not Sure	112	28
	TOTAL	**400**	**100**

Source: Field Work, 2022

Table 3 reveals that a significant portion (66%) of the respondents perceive the roles given to Northerners as "Bad" while the second largest number of respondents (28%) were "Not Sure" and a less significant number (6%), saw it as "Good". This implies that a majority of the Nollywood audience in Plateau State perceive the roles given to Northerners in Nollywood movies as bad.

Table 4: How Nollywood roles portray Northerners

S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentages (%)
1	As Intelligent	12	3
2	As Comedians	178	44.5
3	As Illiterates	182	45.5
4	I don't know	28	7
	TOTAL	**400**	**100**

Source: Field Work, 2022

Table 4 shows that a significant portion of respondents found that the roles given to Northerners in Nollywood movies portray them as illiterates (45.5%) or comedians (44.5%). A less significant portion (7%) of the respondents responded were not sure as they stated that they did not know, while the lowest portion (3%) of respondents believed

the roles given to Northerners in Nollywood movies were intelligent. This implies that a majority of the Nollywood audience in Plateau State perceive the roles given to Northerners in Nollywood as a poor portrayal of Northerners.

Table 5: Nollywood's' portrayal of Northerners should be considered positive

S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentages (%)
1	I strongly agree	24	6
2	I agree	36	9
3	I'm neutral	106	26.5
4	I disagree	224	56
5	I strongly disagree	10	2.5
	TOTAL	**400**	**100**

Source: Field Work, 2022

Table 5 reveals that a significant portion (56%) of respondents disagree with the notion that says the portrayal of Northerners in Nollywood movies could be considered positive. A relatively large portion (26.5%) of the respondents are neutral about the notion, while a small portion (9%) of respondents agree with the notion. Another small portion (6%) strongly agree with the notion, while the lowest portion (2.5%) of respondents strongly agree that the portrayal of Northerners in Nollywood movies could be considered positive. This implies that a majority of the Nollywood audience in Plateau State consider the portrayal of Northerners in Nollywood movies as poor.

Table 6: Rating of the roles given to Northerners in Nollywood

S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentages (%)
1	Excellent	6	1.5
2	Good	34	8.5
3	Fair	166	41.5
4	Poor	194	48.5
	TOTAL	**400**	**100**

Source: Field Work, 2022

Table 6 reveals that a significant portion (48.5%) of the respondents perceived the roles given to Northerners in Nollywood movies as poor. A relatively large portion (41.5%) perceived the roles given to Northerners in

Nollywood movies as fair, while a small portion (8.5%) of the respondents perceived the roles given to Northerners in Nollywood movies as good. The smallest portion (1.5%) of respondents perceived the roles given to Northerners in Nollywood as poor. This implies that a majority of Nollywood audience in Plateau State perceive the roles given to Northerners in Nollywood movies as either poor or fair.

Table 7: Roles given to Northerners are true reflection of realities?

S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentages (%)
1	I strongly agree	4	1
2	I agree	34	8.5
3	I'm neutral	100	25
4	I disagree	224	56
5	I strongly disagree	38	9.5
	TOTAL	**400**	**100**

 Source: Field Work, 2022

Table 7 reveals that a significant portion (56%) of respondents did not perceive the roles given to Northerners in Nollywood as a true reflection of reality. An insignificant portion (25%), of respondents are neutral about the notion, while a smaller portion (9.5%) of respondents strongly agree with the notion. Another small portion (8.5%) of respondents agree with the notion, while the smallest portion (1%) of respondents strongly agree with the notion that says the roles given to Northerners in Nollywood movies are a true reflection of reality. This implies that a majority of the Nollywood audience in Plateau State do not perceive the roles given to Northerners in Nollywood movies as a true reflection reality.

Discussion of Findings

The study uses pre-selected research objectives with the aim of unraveling the perception of audience in Plateau state concerning the portrayal of Northerners in Nollywood movies. The first objective was to evaluate the portrayal of Northerners in Nollywood movies. Based on the findings of the study which were collated from respondents within the three senatorial zones (the northern zone, the central zone, and the southern zone) in the state, an overwhelming number (66%) of the respondents did not consider the roles given to Northerners in Nollywood as good, while a significant portion of the respondents were of the view that the roles given to Northerners in Nollywood movies portray them as illiterates (45.5%) or comedians (44.5%). Mohammed (2019, as cited in Ngbokai, 2019) shares a similar view to the findings of this study, she asserts that the Nigerian media has assisted in the negative stereotyping of Northerners who are always seen as 'Maiguard', 'Maisuya', or 'Maitsire'. We can therefore assume with a good

degree of confidence based on the responses of audience in Plateau State, that the roles given to Northerners in Nollywood movies are poor and denigrating.

The second objective of the study was to find out how the audience in Plateau State perceive the portrayal of Northerners in Nollywood movies. A significant portion of respondents (56%), were of the view that the portrayal of Northerners in Nollywood movies could not be considered positive, while (48.5%) of the respondents perceived the roles given to Northerners in Nollywood movies as poor. We can therefore assume with a good degree of confidence based on the responses of audience in Plateau State, that the portrayal of Northerners in Nollywood movies are mostly negative.

The third objective of the study was to determine if the portrayal of Northerners in Nollywood movies can be regarded as a positive or negative stereotype. The study found that an overwhelmingly significant portion (56%) of respondents did not perceive the roles given to Northerners in Nollywood as a true reflection of reality. Buckingham (2003, p. 57 as cited in Ibbi, 2017) shares a similar view to the findings of this study, he asserts that "the media do not offer us a transparent window on the world but a mediated version of the world." The study also found that based on the responses of the respondents, the most common roles played by Northerners in Nollywood movies were the roles of gateman or security man, gardener or domestic worker, 'suya' seller or hawker, and 'aboki'. We can therefore assume with a good degree of confidence based on the responses of audience in Plateau State, that Northerners are more often than not negatively stereotyped through the roles they are made to play in Nollywood movies.

Conclusion

The study provides an important perspective regarding the perception of Nollywood audience in Plateau state, as findings show that the roles given to Northerners in Nollywood movies are often poor, denigrating and negatively stereotyped. It is therefore worthy of note to state here that Nollywood wields a powerful influence that is often a determinant of audience behaviour, this is due to the fact that audience are likely to watch the content portrayed on screens, internalize them, and maybe even accept them as a perfect representation of reality. The portrayal of Northerners in Nollywood movies therefore shows that there are boiling issues of marginalization, stereotyping and misrepresentation within the buoyant industry.

Recommendations

1. Similar studies should be carried out concerning the misrepresentation and stereotyping of other marginalized groups within the industry, for instance, the marginalization of the LGBTQ community and the physically challenged within Nollywood.
2. Lecturers and scholars in the field of film studies should ensure that courses highlighting the dangers of marginalization, stereotyping and misrepresentation within the movie industry are a core part of the curriculum in film schools and institutes.
3. There should be a conscious effort by film makers, directors and producers to break the mould of marginalization, stereotyping and misrepresentation through the spurning out of projects that deliberately challenge previously accepted film clichés.

4. There should be a conscious effort by film makers, directors, and producers towards ensuring that the roles of Northerners and other marginalized groups within Nollywood are not a biased and stereotypic representation of reality.

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