The Nigeria film industry and national development

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Abstract

The Nigerian film industry (Nollywood) has continued to receive accolades at both continental and international scenes owing to outstanding output and positive influence on sister film industries within the African continent. But despite the continued success story of Nollywood being a top contributor to the nation's Gross Domestic Product and its consequent emergence as a film culture of international repute, the industry is yet to receive adequate attention from the government and other stakeholders. This paper, therefore, investigated the diverse angles from which Nollywood contributes to national development and the need for the industry's potentialities to be fully harnessed in the light of the various impediments to national growth and development in Nigeria. The study adopted the qualitative methodology of research. Content analysis of selected Nollywood films and interviews are approaches employed in gathering qualitative data while leaning on the Modernization Theory to interrogate the research problem. The study found that the Nigerian film industry is a potential socio-economic and cultural powerhouse that can engender significant and sustainable developments in key areas of the nation if well harnessed. The study concludes that key players in Nigeria's sociopolitical, economic, and cultural spheres should prioritize the needs of the industry so that it can attain the desired status as evinced in this paper.

Keywords: Film industry, Modernization, National development, Nollywood, Potentialities, Sustainability

1. Introduction

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary and Thesaurus (2010: 749), industry means "a department or branch of craft, art, business, or manufacture; especially: one that employs a large personnel and capital especially in manufacturing". This definition aptly relates to the concept of film production because a number of human and technical resources are involved in the process of making a film. Kolker (2006) traces part of the history of industrialization of filmmaking to the studio system that was initiated in America in 1919 by D.W Griffith. According to Kolker (2006: 110), Griffith;

> … along with Charlie Chaplin and two other enormously popular actors, Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford, … formed United Artists, a studio whose main purpose was to distribute the independent productions of various filmmakers … the system evolved as a means of industrializing the imagination … turning individual activity into collaborative effort that enabled industrial filmmaking.

It is worthy to note that the idea of the studio system, as mentioned here, does not imply a situation where films are shot in the studio per se. Except, of course, for a studio-based film that demands the creation of computer-generated images, special effects, sets, or other studio-based postproduction activities like editing, the studio system means a company where the best of hands pool technical, financial, and managerial resources together for professional and economic advantage. Kolker (2006: 110) affirms that "as in any manufacturing effort, speed and efficiency, established with the least cost, are essential in the mass production of film. The studios became self-contained entities, with facilities, technical staff, producers, actors, writers, composers, directors, all working within their physical bounds, all of them under contract". Based on the foregoing premise, filmmakers are regarded as industrialists saddled with both scientific and artistic responsibility of manufacturing a unique product – film – for consumers' edutainment.

The above assertion is perhaps why Bell-Gam (2017: 2) insists that one of the profound roles theatre arts and, by extension, its close cousin – film – confers on a practitioner is that of a scientist. He likens theatre and film to a processing company, and explains that stage and screen directors, along with their cast and crew, are involved in

various processes of processing a raw material (an idea or mainly a script) into a refined product for stage or screen production. This process, which is as artistic as it is scientific, qualifies theatre and film media to be regarded as industries where cultural products are manufactured. Culture in this wise refers to "the form and content of our selves in relation to our community, our country, our social and economic class, our entertainments, our politics and economics" that are reflected in films (Kolker, 2006: 7). Galadima's (2001: 164) summation that film "is an art, science and a culture" therefore lays the over flogged argument about whether film is an art or science to rest. Film can thus be regarded as an artistic science and or a scientific art because of the complementary roles the duo play in the profession.

The concept of filmmaking as an industry can be viewed from two basic perspectives; the first is where these aforementioned artists, who Kolker (2006: 111) further refers to as "creative craftspeople" congregate in order to achieve cost-effective and artistically effective production. Filmmaking is hardly an individual venture. No matter how creatively talented, professionally knowledgeable, or artistically experienced one may be, accomplishing an ideal production through collaboration with other skilled individuals is almost unavoidable. The other perspective to which filmmaking is viewed as an industry is concerned with the existence of different production companies, earlier labeled "studios" by Kolker (2006: 86), within the same geographical enclave. This results, more often than not, in mass release of films by the various production houses almost simultaneously, thus creating a film market from where audiences make their selection. This perspective is broader because it creates room for competition. Krings (2015: 6), having conducted extensive research on such industries in Africa, labels them "African cottage media industries" because, according to him, they are artisanal, having "been built on small media with video being the most prolific". These media industries according to him "are commercially oriented. Since they depend on the market, they keep an ear out for popular discourse, reworking it in their products, which are in turn fed back onto the streets" Krings (2015: 6). The reesearcher further asserts that "the Nigerian video industry is the most prolific and best-known example of such an industry in Africa" (Krings, 2015: 7). Film industry as it will apply to this study therefore implies the activities of production, marketing and distribution of films by a large number of persons of the geographical or cultural origin.

In Nigeria, the industry is, in spite of all the odds against it, known today as Nollywood – the first industry on the continent to be named in the mould of the most popular film industries on the globe; Hollywood and Bollywood. Nollywood, as an industry, is at the centre of the success story that may be told about not just Nigeria but Africa. As a trail-blazing film culture in Africa, it has contributed significantly to the laundering of the continent's image in the international community and contributes significantly to the nation's development agenda. Despite these strides, the industry's contributions to national development have been underexplored in research. This paper, therefore, attempts to fill this knowledge void by interrogating the various dimensions to which the industry engenders national development, the challenges that seem to hinder the maximization of its potentials and the way forward in the light of current realities.

2. Literature review: Film industry as an index for national development

The discourse of the film industry and national development is, of course, as should be expected, hydra-headed because of the various facets of nation building that film is connected with. This is probably why Kolker (2006: 2) states that "film, politics, money, and culture are never separable". The major deduction from the above assertion is that film is not only a tool for sociopolitical, economic, and cultural development of a nation, but that these roles are more often than not inextricable. In order to properly review the role of the film industry in the development of a nation, there is a need to understand what national development means. Adekola and Uzoagu (2022: 375) succinctly define national development as "a process of reconstruction and development in the various dimensions of a nation and the development of individuals … (which) … includes full growth and expansion of industries, agriculture, education, social, religious, and cultural institutions. Based on the above definition, it can be said that the film industry, which is a vital aspect of the culture industry/institution, is one of the strongest agents of national development.

The film artist, first and foremost, functions as the moral conscience of his society. In essence, the archetypal filmmaker, albeit craftily, interrogates issues of national importance while pointing the way forward on matters that tend to threaten the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural progress of the nation. Thus, Yar'Adua, Msughter and Garuba (2023: 109) maintain that the media, of which film is one of its most powerful arms, "play a pivotal role in the development process of a country … (because) … they regularly cover all sorts of issues on politics, education, economy and health, among others". Furthermore, Bello, quoted in Gwam-Nzekwu (2008: 173), captures this principal responsibility of the film industry by stating that "as filmmakers, yours is a powerful tool, almost greater than government policies or even religious preachers. Because of the magnitude of your viewers, you are being entrusted to create and not to destroy, to uplift, to enrich, and not to impoverish. In essence, a politically committed film industry conscientizes the public while keeping its government in check. As an independent industry devoid of government control or influence, except of course through regulation, Nigerian filmmakers who understand the potency of the medium can make films that serve as checks and balances to those in leadership positions.

The importance of wielding film as an artistic weapon for regulating leadership is because a nation's development is largely dependent on the development agenda of its leaders, and so the role of the film artist in commenting on sociopolitical issues capable of contributing to effective positive change in the leadership structure of a nation appears almost indispensable. Bamidele (2008: 128) regards this as "the necessity of film" and according to him, the essence of film is encapsulated in its use as "a propaganda art and a very necessary art in making a case for a nation". The researcher adds that film as propaganda "has a double-edged effect … described as integrational and agitational propaganda". The author further explains that when films tend to flatter and promote the positive image of government

alone, even when unnecessary, then the doctrine of integrational propaganda comes into play. Kolker (2006: 2) corroborates Bamidele's view by asserting that "all nations, our own included, understand the power of film … to influence their people, to propagandize values and ideologies". A good example of such a situation is when the late Prof. Dora Akunyili, who was Nigeria's minister of Information under former President Goodluck Jonathan's administration, made a call on Nigerian filmmakers to key into the rebranding Nigeria campaign of then President.

On the other hand, when "film like any other art unbound itself from the "paint me bright" demand of government (and) … does not attempt to hide the lies in the nation no matter how the powers that be want to court its favour", it is considered to be carrying out an agitational propaganda (Bamidele, 2008: 128). A film industry that devotes itself to exposing the ugly underside of its government helps in stimulating development because, through such depictions, its leaders may be forced to sit up. A professional film industry, however, understands how to strike a balance between its integrational and agitational propaganda responsibilities.

National development is not determined by the government alone. The governed have a role to play in this development agenda. Film is therefore not meant to satirize political leaders only. It can be adopted as a pedagogical tool for educating the masses. Bamidele (2008: 131) again states that social change can be effected in a society through the use of film for national education. Human development takes the lead as the most important aspect of national development, and film plays a vital role in this regard. Anyanwu (2008: 83) affirms that "national development is that which embraces every segment of the society and makes the people feel a sense of belonging. In this light, the motion picture is ideal because development necessitates a change of attitude and behaviour, which in turn calls for sensitization before it can occur". This is one of the social responsibility roles of an effective and efficient film industry.

Another salient dimension to which film can be employed in accelerating the momentum of national transformation is by using it as a medium for promoting and projecting a nation's cultural heritage to the international community. It is a truism that the cultural identity of a people makes them unique, and so nations tend to employ film as a cultural product and supposedly the most popular mass communication medium, to sell their uniqueness to the world, which is the reason any serious government does not joke with its film industry. Hence, Ndu (2023: 78) holds that one of the fundamental functions of film is to project a positive image of a nation to the international community and further admonishes Nollywood "filmmakers to use film to restore, elevate, renew, rediscover, and acknowledge the diversity of lives in Nigeria, live experiences, culture, and knowledge of the indigenous people of Nigeria". The necessity of projecting a positive image of the nation has further heightened in today's information technology-driven society. Although national development cuts across various facets of society as noted above, this study focuses on the issues of inter-ethnic tolerance and collaboration, cultural promotion, entrepreneurship, and youth empowerment.

3. Theoretical framework: Modernization theory

This study is hinged on the modernization theory. Modernization as a sociological theory emerged as a fallout of intellectual inquiries that followed the development and consequent emergence of Third World economies as a post-Second World War phenomenon. The agenda that surrounded the theory on inception was the modernization of underdeveloped nations. According to Usman, Dangana and Masaibi (2025: 31-32), "Modernization theory has been a key framework for understanding political development in many countries in the Global South, particularly those emerging from colonial rule. The theory suggests that societies go through a linear process, moving from traditional to modern systems of governance, economics, and society". In other words, the theory provides a framework for understanding the process of social, economic, and political transformation of society from traditional to modern. Hence, Usman, Dangana and Masaibi (2025: 33) further explain that the theory emerged as a response to the challenges of development and modernization in post-colonial societies. They further explain that,

> Modernization refers to the process through which societies transition from traditional or pre-modern conditions to more advanced, industrialized, and urbanized states. This transformation is typically marked by economic growth, technological advancements, political changes, and shifts in social structures. Modernization theory, which emerged in the mid-20th century, suggests that societies develop in a linear and progressive manner, with each society following a similar path toward development.

Mba and Ojukwu (2019: 17) identify a strong correlation between modernization and development while asserting that the latter is a fallout of the former. Hence, they contend that "modernization is the view of historical progression as a series of stages, reflecting intellectual, technological, economic and political development".

Succinctly put, the theory of modernization is concerned with the idea and processes of development that occurs in various aspects of society, especially in certain areas which directly and indirectly impacts positively on the lives of people. The theory argues that transformation or transitions take place in society as humanity adopts more current or modern approaches in doing things. Humans are regarded as the agents of development according to the theory, and so their ability to adopt effective approaches to addressing societal issues determines the level of development to be recorded in society.

Film is regarded as a potent tool wielded by citizens who engage in transforming and modernizing their society. Ndu (2023: 77) affirms that "film is not only a form of art but also a tool for social Reformation, Transformation, and Decoloniality; as it … seeks to liberate, make visible, and advance a distinct perception of the image of the creating society. The film of a Nation is a liberatory language for the future of the nation as it projects the identity of the nation to the world". In other words, film is one of the potent agents of modernization. In light of the above, Nollywood,

regarded as an African media cottage industry due to its artisanal evolution, has recorded transformational progression and currently stands almost at par with notable global film cultures like Hollywood and Bollywood. The Modernization Theory, therefore, underpins this study as it posits that social, economic, and political progress is achieved through adopting modern practices and cultural shifts. The theory thus provides a lens to evaluate the transformation recorded in the Nigerian film industry and its potential to foster national development.

4. Methodology
Research design: The study adopted content analysis and interview approaches of the qualitative methodology to investigate diverse issues relating to Nollywood as a contributor to national development. Adopting qualitative methodology for this study is justified by the fact that it enabled an in-depth interrogation of critical issues bothering on the social, cultural, and economic aspects of the industry and how it impacts the Nigerian nation.

4.1. Data collection method
Sampling technique: The case study films were selected through a purposive sampling technique. The researcher having watched a number of films that explore the theme of national development like Jeta Amata's *Black November* (2012), Kemi Adetiba's *King of Boys* (2018), Biyi Bandele's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2013), Editi Effiong's *The Black Book* (2023), purposively selected Tope Oshin's *Up North* (2018) and Geneveive Nnaji's *LionHeart* (2018) because beyond the exposition of political maneuvering and instability, oil and youth exploitation that the other films majorly explore, the selected films strategically capture national development from the angle of national integration, inter-ethnic collaboration, entrepreneurship, youth empowerment, skill acquisition and cultural promotion which are the major aspects of national development this study addresses. The films' contents demonstrate Nollywood's pedagogical and entrepreneurial roles in the uplift, transformation, and development of the nation.

Content analysis: Tope Oshin's *Up North* (2019) and Genevieve Nnaji's LionHeart (2018) were purposively selected for this study. Themes, ethnographic and cultural depictions in these case study films were critically examined to identify how they connect to national development. Through content analysis, various elements that enhanced the films' narrative flow and projected certain socio-cultural patterns through mise-en-scène compositions were critically analyzed.

Interview: The interview served as a crucial qualitative data-gathering instrument employed by the researcher. The researcher interviewed Nollywood pioneer producers and directors who provided relevant data concerning the status quo, modus operandi, challenges, and how the industry's potential can be maximized for the betterment of the nation.

4.2. Data analysis
Qualitative data obtained from films and interviews were subjected to thematic analysis, thereby identifying recurrent themes such as cultural representation, national unity, economic impact, gender empowerment, and social education. This approach facilitated a deeper understanding of how Nollywood contributes to and influences Nigeria's development trajectory.

5. Driving Nigeria's development agenda through Nollywood films
One of the effective ways Nollywood engenders national development is through its utilization of digital technology in projecting the nation's image and marketing its cultures in the international community. Shaka (2024: 32) contends that "film is a cultural commodity, which means that what it sells is the culture and value system of the people. Now, these are quite intangible things. They are not things that you can buy and hold in your hands. Yet, they are the things that matter most in every society". In other words, a society is sustained and, in fact, advances depending on how film sells its culture in national and global markets.

Digital technology is one aspect of modernization that has significantly impacted Nollywood as an industry. The continuous upgrade of information technology that has come to be known today as digitization has made identity consciousness a matter of delicate and diplomatic importance, and Nollywood has continued to appropriate digital technology into its practices. Idegu (2002: 15) explains that "the role of information technology in this global village, or globalization in its entirety (sic), has remained focal and vital in the whole process of inter-relatedness of humanity". With the digitization technology that has made a large number of both homemade and foreign films just a click away on the internet, the film industry has stepped up its relevance as a viable means of cultural identity marketing. A pioneer producer in Nollywood – Rob Bob Emeka Eze (2024), in an interview with the researcher, explained that one peculiar characteristic of Nollywood is that it easily adapts to contemporary trends, and digital technology is one of such adaptations. As the technology of film production advances, Nollywood, as a rising film culture, according to Eze, continues to adjust itself to contemporary demands (personal interview).

On this note, Idegu (2002) opines that even though the Nigerian video film has successfully taken over from Hollywood as well as films from other foreign cinema industries as a medium of popular entertainment for Nigerian audiences, the industry has, however, not done much in projecting the national image of Nigeria to the global world. The author accuses Nigerian film producers of unprofessionalism which has resulted in the "over romanticized themes in some of the Nigerian home video productions who in their forceful urge towards identity consciousness, over flog some issues so treated, principal amongst which is fetishism and "African juju" and further doubts the efficiency and

effectiveness of the Nigeria film industry in promoting a unitary national culture because "script writers, directors, producers seem to delve into some ethnic enclaves in this whole issue of identity formation" (Idegu, 2002: 20 - 21). Ossai (2002: 29) also tends to corroborate Idegu's view by asserting that "national identity has to do with national culture, which is a unique pattern of collective values, beliefs and emotional attitudes" and that the politics of putting Nigeria, which is a multiethnic enclave, together has made the formation of a national identity a problem. As a result of this, Nigerian films "emphasized community or individual values instead of articulating national values" (Ossai, 2002: 30). The scholars contend that this loophole adversely affects the contribution of film in national image laundering, which is an important aspect of modernization.

Another group of scholars, however, disagrees with their claim. Haynes and Okome (1998: 106-107), who are frontline pro-Nollywood scholars, argue that although the films emanating from this industry;

> … are produced on a number of distinct bases, and have a variety of forms, styles and themes, as well as expressions of languages (however) taken together, they give us something like an image of the Nigerian nation – not necessarily in the sense of delivering a full, accurate, and analytical description of social reality, but in the sense of reflecting the productive forces of the nation, economic and cultural. An attempt at sociological mapping of the phenomenon shows us a congeries of forms, radically different at the poles in ethnic and class terms, but with wide areas of overlap and convergence.

What the above statement implies is that the diversity and distinctiveness of cultures in Nigeria make filmic presentation of a unified Nigerian culture, in the real sense of the word, almost unachievable.

Nonetheless, the conglomeration of various films emanating from the industry has, according to them, elevated the cultural image of the country even among diaspora audiences. Krings and Okome (2013: 5) further corroborate their position by asserting that the Nigerian film industry has been able to stir up an appeal for its films in Africa and beyond because of the unique way it has been able to present the Nigerian culture. Nigerian films, according to them, borrow concepts like costumes, makeup, story, and locale from different cultures in making a particular film, which at the end gives it what looks like an approximated Nigerian cultural identity. To justify their claim, they contend that "Kenyan politicians have been spotted wearing Nigerian gowns … Congolese seamstresses receive requests to sew dresses and skirts in Nigerian styles, new buildings in Kinshasa are inspired by architecture seen in Nigerian video films". Rob Emeka Eze (2024), while corroborating this point, explained that he did not appreciate Nollywood's popularity until he travelled to the Niger Republic with Ramsey Nouah and some other notable Nollywood faces in 1998. According to him, fans fell over themselves to touch the film stars. "But there was no digital technology as at then so they did not get the chance to take pictures with the actors as they would have done today" (personal interview).

The various attempts by the African audiences to identify with the culture and practice of the Nigerian people not only show the projection of 'Nigerianess' in the films but also invariably suggest their acceptance of Nigeria as a more culturally assertive country. Nollywood, therefore, not only contributes to the socio-cultural, economic, and political development of Nigeria but also inspires other African nations, which is what Modernization theory preaches.

Similarly, Utoh-Ezeajugh (2008) contends that the Nigerian film industry launders the nation's image while adding that redeeming the almost battered image of the Nigerian nation, characterized by an increased crime rate exacerbated by the successive military dictatorships that besieged the country, would not have been possible without the emergence of Nollywood. The video-film industry, which evolved during the military era, according to her, helped to salvage the damaged image of Nigeria in the eyes of the international community (p.249). Thus, Barclays Ayakoroma, in re-echoing Utoh-Ezeajugh's mind, states that "perhaps apart from soccer, the video film industry has positively projected Nigeria on the international scene" (qtd. in Utoh-Ezeajugh, 2008: 250). The conscious effort to bring about behavioral change or any other kind of positive change in society through the use of film and other forms of media in general is what communications scholars term "development communication" (Ekwuazi, 2008, p.191). And this is what the case study films, Oshin's *Up North* (2019) and Nnaji's *LionHeart* (2018) tend to achieve.

6. Harnessing Nigeria's socio-economic potentials through Nollywood

The economy is regarded as one of the key factors that can either enhance or impede national development. In fact, Adekola and Uzoagu (2022: 371) hold that the level of development in a country is somewhat related to its economy. The scholars, while drawing a distinction among developed, developing, underdeveloped, and less-developed countries – a dichotomy based on income levels – state that growth in the economies of any country largely depends on its industrial output. In other words, an industrialized economy portends rapid development for its nation if properly managed. Since industrialization is a strong booster of national economy, suffice it to say then that the film sector is a prototype of an economy-growing industry or as Shaka (2017) puts it, "one of the pillars of national economy" (par. 5). Succinctly put, "the business of film ripples through the economy" (Kolker, 2006: 2). By regarding film as "an economic commodity", Kolker (2006) therefore affirms that the film industry is directly and indirectly linked to the economy of a nation which is based on the fact that serious economic activities take place in a film industry.

The whole process of filmmaking, starting from the preproduction stage to postproduction, which involves purchases and rentals of materials and equipment, hires of human resources, censorship, marketing/sales, as well as export of the finished products are all an industrial or better still economic activity capable of raising the Gross Domestic Product of a country. Ilukwe and Ogaraku (2025: 274-275) affirm that Nollywood film is a cultural commodity and foreign exchange earner that significantly impacts Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product. They insist that

"the filmmaking sector currently generates (over) $600m yearly and employs more than one million Nigerians, making it second only to agriculture in the list of largest employers of labour in Nigeria". The foregoing underscores job creation as a fundamental characteristic of the Nigerian film industry. Notable Nollywood director and producer, Lancelot Imasuem (2024), explained in an interview with the researcher that Nollywood is the largest industry in Nigeria. The researcher further observed that, as basically a privately controlled enterprise, the industry provides entrepreneurial opportunities that help the nation to cushion the effect of job scarcity, which Nigeria has been grappling with for years. Were it not for Nollywood, according to him, unemployment in Nigeria would have degenerated into a crisis situation (telephone interview).

Unemployment has been identified as a serious national problem confronting Nigeria. With the recent overcrowding in the labour market caused by the increasing number of persons who graduate from various disciplines in Nigeria without much hope of getting a formal or, as widely termed, white-collar job, experts like Akinnawo (2013: 1) see entrepreneurship as the "inescapable necessity" to get the country out of the woods. The researcher further calls for the establishment of more private-driven businesses as a survivalist strategy in the face of the worrisome spate of unemployment in Nigeria (Akinnawo, 2013: 3). It is not surprising, therefore, that the Nigerian film industry is one of the biggest employers of labour, especially for the teeming unemployed youths today. With the expansion of the industry orchestrated by productions in other native languages apart from the three major languages – Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba, and English, the only foreign and most popular of the language genres, the population of practitioners increases on a daily basis.

The rise of skit-making and other short film genres that are characterized by a sparse cast and minimal budget has further widened the operational scope of the Nigerian film industry, thereby giving room for unlimited exploration of talents. In fact, skit making has turned out to be an extension of Nollywood or what the researcher terms "neo-Nollywood". Star skit makers who became popular due to their innovativeness and ingenuity, like Adebowale Adedayo (Mr. Macaroni), Nasiru Lawal (Nasboi), Josh Alfred (Josh2funny), Omozele Gabriel (Flora) among others, have been featuring in Nollywood films since the last the couple of years, a trend that has contributed in narrowing the gulf that existed between Nollywood feature filmmakers and skit makers.

Big budget production companies like Anakle Films and Inkblot, as well as Netflix producers and distributors of *Up North* and *LionHeart,* respectively, engage large cast and crew as members of their production team. The film's end credits show that the production teams consist of a large cast and crew from various tribes in Nigeria. Being one of the most detribalized industries in Nigeria, as producers tend to be concerned more about merit than ethnicities while engaging artists for a production, the industry promotes the one Nigeria agenda in practice. *Up North* showcases local talent in front of and behind the camera, thereby contributing to job creation within the industry. By celebrating Nigerian culture and narratives, the film promotes domestic tourism to northern Nigeria, potentially stimulating local businesses and economies. As the first Nigerian film acquired by Netflix, *LionHeart,* on the other hand, highlights the potential for Nollywood to enter the global streaming market, thereby attracting international investment and enhancing revenue. The film's success illustrates how digital platforms can expand distribution channels for Nigerian cinema, increasing visibility and profitability for filmmakers.

There is however, some challenges that tend to weaken the industry's potency in engendering national development. This challenge is encapsulated in what Shaka (2014) terms the near absence of "disciplinary focus" for the industry. The author argues that there is a need for the professionalization of film practice in Nigeria. According to him, "the film industry, like every other productive sector of the national economy, can only grow to meet our expectations and desires if we provide it disciplinary focus. If you cannot imagine growth in the financial sector, the pharmaceutical sector, the legal sector, the economic sector, and so on, without the presence of foundational disciplines to drive them, so as it is with the film industry" (Shaka, 2014: 12). The researcher therefore recommends a disciplinary foundation in film studies as a primary step in the entrenchment of excellence as a culture in film practice in Nigeria. What the foregoing implies is that to make Nollywood practice more result-oriented, formal training should be considered a prerequisite.

7. Analysis and discussion

Up North follows the journey of Bassey Otuekong (Bankole 'Banky W' Wellington), the privileged son of a prominent Nigerian businessman, Chief Otuekong (Kanayo O. Kanayo), who is sent to serve in Bauchi, one of the states that make up the northern region of Nigeria, as part of his National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). Initially reluctant and disconnected from the culture around him, Bassey gradually confronts the challenges of his new environment. During his time in the north, he faces cultural differences, forms unexpected friendships, and learns valuable lessons about empathy, understanding, and the importance of unity amidst Nigeria's ethnic diversity. He finds an alley in Sadiq (Ibrahim Suleiman) and love in Aminat (Rahama Sadau). The film portrays the vibrant culture of northern Nigeria while emphasizing themes of personal growth, self-discovery, patriotism, and the need for national cohesion.

LionHeart centers on Adaeze (Genevieve Nnaji), a determined and resourceful woman navigating the male-dominated world of the transportation business in Nigeria. Adaeze takes over as the CEO of LionHeart transportation company from her aged father, Chief Obiagu (Pete Edochie), upon his retirement, and is determined to revive her father's dwindling business. Faced with numerous challenges, including skepticism from her male colleagues and difficulties in managing the company's operations, she is resolved to prove her capability as a leader. Maxwell (Nkem Owoh), Adaeze's uncle, becomes her beacon of support through her administrative journey towards rescuing the ailing transportation business, even though she was wary of her father's decision to bring his younger brother into the picture,

prima facie. Inspired by his wisdom and experience, Adaeze uncovers plots and defies conspiracies hatched by treacherous members of the board of directors to destabilize the business, overthrow her, and dispossess the family of the business. Meanwhile, Maxwell saves Hamza (Yakubu Mohammed), son of a wealthy Northern businessman, from being defrauded by a group of Igbo fraudsters, an act that metamorphoses into a business partnership between LionHeart Transport Company Limited and Maikono Motors, owned by Alhaji Danladi Maikano (Sani Mu'azu). This partnership saves the LionHeart business from impending collapse, to the disappointment of treacherous members of the board of directors. The film underscores female empowerment as one of its major thematic thrusts while highlighting resilience and innovative thinking as critical factors needed in surmounting life challenges. The film showcases not only the complexities of modern Nigerian society but also the potential for women to thrive in business and leadership roles.

Unity in diversity, encapsulated in a popular phrase – "one Nigeria" – which emerged in Nigeria's political space in the late 60s and has endured till now, is identified as a recurrent theme in the films. Through their narratives, the films sensitize the Nigerian populace on the need to shun ethnic, cultural, religious, and ideological differences and unite in order to achieve meaningful progress in the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural sectors of the nation. Oshin captures the above theme in *Up North* through Bassey's character. His unforeseen but sudden compulsory sojourn to the north reveals his initial contempt for the region, characteristic of the ethnic and regional bias that defines average Nigerians, but diminishes after he begins to freely interact with the natives. He begins to take a liking to their way of life, familiarizing himself with the flora and fauna of the people and even exporting their culture to the global community through his trending social media posts. Bassey's mandatory one-year national youth service programme turns into a journey of cultural exchange. Oshin adopts the NYSC programme as a metaphor for national unity and cohesion as it is one of the very few schemes that, apart from football, often bring Nigerians together under the same umbrella.

| PLATE 1: Bassey and Sadiq, his new found Hausa friend, prepare to leave camp after the three weeks orientation exercise. | Plate 2: Bassey and Sadiq at the Emir's palace during the Duban festival. |

Encouraging mutual respect and inter-ethnic collaboration, which is part of the goals of the programme, is one of the practical ways of engendering national integration and cultural orientation. Thus Bassey's NYSC journey promotes the ideology of ethnic and religious tolerance, stressing that Nigerians share common values in spite of ethno-religious divergences. The secret to positive change, for Oshin, is Nigeria discovering the strength in her diversity and maximizing it for lasting national development. As Bassey and his co-northern allies unite to confront common issues that pose a challenge to them, the implication of unbiased sociopolitical activism – conquering ineffective leadership, Nigeria's common enemy is thus captured. Their determination to look beyond tribal differences and forge a common cause orchestrated their resounding successes to the admiration and commendation of the Governor of the state. Even religious bigots who employ the arms of Sharia law to frustrate Bassey's talent development scheme in the community fail because of the unwavering support he receives from his Hausa friends, Sadiq (Ibrahim Suleiman) and Maryam (Rahama Sadau).

A similar thematic thrust can be identified in *LionHeart,* but in this instance, it is through a female character – Adaeze – that Nnaji propagates the "One Nigeria" ideology. As Adaeze resiliently confronts the challenge of reviving her father's transportation business, defeating naysayers who are already brewing to take over the administration perchance the Obiagu family fails to resuscitate the business, her devotion and tenacity are brought to the fore. As a young female administrator, her doggedness in the face of stiff opposition and connivances from the male-dominated board of directors gives the film a subtle gender undertone while revealing the need for detribalized, non-gender-based collaboration within Nigeria's socio-economic space. It advocates the need to advance partnership devoid of gender or ethnic affiliation for enhanced national and global impact. From the LionHeart transportation company in the southeast to the Maikano Motors in the north, the film clearly conveys borderless communication, inter-ethnic collaborations, and bridge-building as global best practices in commerce.

Plate 2: Obiagu initially turns down partnership suggestion from his daughter and brother, Adaeze and Maxwell.

Plate 3: Maikno Motors chief, Alhaji Maikano is welcomed as a shareholder in LionHeart Transport Company.

Businesses that desire to grow beyond their localities in the contemporary age must learn to interface and build strong alliances that can possibly attract foreign investors, thereby harnessing national development, and this is what the Lionheart Transport – Maikano Motors partnership in the film advocates. The regional collaboration between the two transportation companies deconstructs the traditional pattern or stereotypical competition approach in business while adopting the "collaboration is the new competition" trend that is noticeable within the creativity/entertainment landscape in recent times. This trend, which favours commercial, ideological, and intellectual dynamism, inclusivity, and amalgamation that transgresses ethno-regional boundaries, is seen as a catalyst for achieving significant sociopolitical, economic, and cultural development in Nigeria. Such an alliance between the Obiagu – Maikano families promotes the theme of national unity and integration while proposing the possible creation of a national culture, a Nigerian culture that can objectively represent the major ethnicities that make up the nation.

Within the African worldview, love and marriage are intangible but symbolic phenomena that contribute to societal peace, harmony, and advancement. This is possibly why they serve as metaphors employed in cementing the peace and harmony established between the northern/southern parties captured in the films. For instance, in *Up North*, Bassey's love affair with Maryam, which culminates in marriage, symbolically represents how bridges of ethnic and cultural tolerance can be built. Their relationship exemplifies the possible transformations that can be recorded in seemingly difficult situations if a collective frontier force is formed. Through Bassey's expression of awe for Maryam's culture, captured in the film through creative mise-en-scène compositions, Oshin underscores the need to accommodate one another in spite of obvious cultural or ideological differences. It is through such means that the "one Nigeria" agenda can be realized, as exemplified through Bassey's unconcealed interest in Maryam and enthusiasm towards Maryam's culture and identity. This love affair between the duo, which serves as the wheel that drives the story, punctuates the nursed hope of a future Nigeria that has succeeded in laying aside all encumbrances and discriminations that characterized her past and has forged a better future where the different ethnic groups intermarry and enjoy a nation devoid of animosity of any kind.

Plate 5: Chibuike (Phyno) performs during a party that seals the business and marital relationship between the Obiagus and Maikanos in *LionHeart*.

Plate 6: *Up North* – Bassey and Maryam reassure each other of their readiness to live as couple as Bassey takes up a reporter job in BBC, Bauchi.

Similarly, Adaeze's marriage to Hamza (Yakubu Mohammed), Alhaji Maikano's son in *LionHeart,* concretizes the relationship that has been fostered between the two families. The family, which is regarded as a microcosm of a society, is adopted as a metaphor for preaching peace and reconciliation among the northern and southeastern regions. The marriage between the Hausa and Igbo families has an implication for the broader society. It can be translated to mean a call for a merger between the north and southeastern Nigeria, which can be achieved through the protracted tradition of intermarriage between the two regions, as this can culminate in national unity.

Plate 7: Igbo dancers performing during the party in *LionHeart*, signaling cultural promotion and export.	Plate 8: Local instrumentation during the traditional marriage rites between Sadiq and Zainab in *Up North* signaling cultural promotion and export.

Marriage, traditionally a significant cultural practice, represents the merging of families and cultures. By uniting through marriage, Adaeze and Alhaji's son symbolizes the coming together of the diverse regions of Nigeria. This union suggests that love can bridge gaps between cultures and foster understanding, ultimately contributing to national unity. The fact that almost all the actors who featured in the films are indigenes of the regions they represent in the films presents Nollywood as an industry that practices what it preaches – national integration. The industry serves as a catalyst for national development.

8. Implications of the study

Findings from this study have shown that Nollywood can be pivotal to Nigeria's socio-economic, political, and cultural development. The implications of this study are as follows:

Need for Government Recognition and Support: The findings underscore the need for government agencies and policymakers to recognize Nollywood as a vital socio-economic and cultural asset, and so calls for the formulation of strategic policies that can support industry growth, including funding, infrastructure, and training programmes.

Nollywood as a Tool for Cultural Diplomacy: Nollywood's capacity to project Nigeria's culture globally as evinced in this study, implies that the industry can serve as a diplomatic tool to enhance Nigeria's image, advance cultural diplomacy, and promote national identity.

Exploiting Nollywood's Potentials for Nigeria's Socio-economic Gains: With Nollywood's substantial contribution to Nigeria's GDP and employment, the industry can be harnessed more effectively to encourage economic diversification, attract foreign investment, and promote entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the industry's role as a significant employer, especially for youth and marginalized groups like the physically challenged and educationally disadvantaged, has implications for alleviating unemployment and fostering skills acquisition and development.

Promoting National Integration and Unity: Films that depict diverse cultural narratives and promote the 'One Nigeria' ideology, like Oshin's *Up North* and Nnaji's *LionHeart,* have the potential to promote social-cultural and religious cohesion, reduce ethnic prejudices, and encourage unity in diversity.

Educational Impact: Nollywood films serve as a powerful pedagogical tool to address social issues such as gender inequality, corruption, and ineffective leadership that tend to characterize the Nigerian political space.

Cultural Preservation and Global Influence: The industry's ability to showcase Nigeria's rich cultural heritage, which helps preserve indigenous traditions and languages, is underscored in this study. Also, as Nollywood films penetrate international markets through digital platforms, they influence global perceptions of Nigeria and contribute to its positive image laundering.

9. Contributions and recommendations

The study applies Modernization Theory to demonstrate how various technological and artistic innovations transformed Nollywood and currently position it as a global film culture. Furthermore, it provides qualitative evidence of Nollywood's multifaceted role in promoting national cohesion, cultural identity, economic development, and social change in Nigeria. The study also underscores the industry's potential as a catalyst for sustainable development, urging stakeholders to harness its full potential. Based on the foregoing contributions, the study therefore recommends that;
- Government should establish dedicated agencies and funding schemes to support Nollywood's growth, including the provision of grants for training, infrastructure development, and international marketing, in order to encourage quality creative output.

- Government and relevant stakeholders should encourage capacity building and professionalization through town–gown collaboration between Nollywood and academic institutions. Routine (re)trainings in areas such as directing, screenwriting, cinematography, costume, make-up, scenic design, and sound engineering to improve quality standards should be encouraged.
- The study also recommends that producers and directors should channel their artistic energies into the production of films that emphasize national unity, cultural diversity, and social issues, which align with the nation's developmental goals as captured in the case study films.
- Nigerian filmmakers should borrow a leaf from films like *Up North* and *LionHeart*. Guilds governing the industry, such as the Directors Guild of Nigeria (DGN), Association of Movie Producers (AMP), Association of Nollywood Core Producers (ANCOP), and Nollywood Producers Guild USA, should persuade members to produce films with a strong pedagogical essence. Need for thorough research to understand the needs of the nation and how to employ film as an effective tool in addressing them should be emphasized.
- Nollywood should continuously invest in digital and innovation-driven infrastructures that can constantly enable it expand technologically. It should sponsor the invention of indigenous streaming platforms that can compete favourably with foreign digital film markets like Netflix. Such innovation will contribute significantly to boosting Nigeria's digital economy and global relevance. Adopting cutting-edge technology in making its films will endear it to a global community of film viewers.
- The industry's stakeholders should endeavour to establish data repositories to monitor economic impact, employment statistics, and audience preferences, informing policy and investment decisions.

10. Conclusion
Nollywood has turned out to be one of the world's film powers. It is one of the few innovations that have given Nigeria global recognition and influence. In other words, the industry has given Nigeria a facelift among the international community. Beyond the glamour that Nollywood has bestowed upon the country, it has, through socio-cultural and political representation, elevated the status of the nation. The influence that Nollywood wields both locally and globally, and its empowerment characteristic, imply that it can engender development in different layers of the nation. This study therefore calls for serious attention to be paid to the industry by both government and other relevant stakeholders to enable it thrive better. Concerted efforts should therefore be made to ensure that the industry's full potentials are exploited.

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