

Popular Culture and the Nigerian Filmic Space: The Efficacy Entertainment Braid

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Abstract

Popular culture is ever evolving; it creates eddies and currents and is a complex of interdependent viewpoints with effects on society. In the Nigerian context, popular culture has developed into a powerful cultural force that shapes values and social standards in the filmic space, while also entertaining. This study interrogates how Nigerian popular culture influence the narratives and themes of Nollywood films. It explores how filmmakers incorporate trending cultural elements to enhance audience engagement and the reciprocal relationship between Nigerian films and societal values. It goes further to examine how social media amplify the role of popular culture in Nollywood. Arguing from a popular culture theoretical perspective, this study adopts ethnography to map the influence that popular culture has gained. It argues that popular culture has become essential in today's globalized society due to its constant rise which could also be attributed to the rise of new technologies. The study asserts that Nigerian films are a product of their culture and, as such, represent the beliefs, attitudes and concerns that are prevalent in the society, even though they also shape the popular culture of their audience.

Keywords: *Film, Nigerian, Popular Culture, Social Media, Trends.*

Introduction

Popular culture occurs in a particular location and is time specific; it changes constantly. It could be described as a complex of interrelated thoughts and viewpoints that generate waves and flows that affect society as well as its institutions in many forms. It is suggested that some currents in popular culture may originate in/or diverge into a subculture, reflecting viewpoints that are only dimly known in the mainstream. In general, popular culture tends to have a wide appeal.

The totality of popular social and artistic expression is usually referred to as Popular Culture, distinguishing it from elite or high culture. Communication Scholars define popular culture

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very broadly. They consider it to include music, sports, films, television programmes and virtually any product or service that is designed for amusement and diversion and sold for a profit. Even t-shirts with funny messages and slogans would fit such a definition; this is easily relatable in the Nigerian situation where instances of public concern have resulted in production of body wears bearing popular culture messages. Additionally, these messages manifest in different forms with the social space giving them huge weights and expanded scope. The various means of popular culture sharing include body wear, filmic space, TikTok videos, Instagram posts, twitter posts and hashtags, Facebook feeds and so on. Nigerian film makers also key into these regularly released trends to boost the industry and they seem to be gaining global acceptance.

Simply expressed, mass-communicated messages with low intellectual and aesthetic standards, that is, contents that are intended to amuse and delight a mass audience, could be described as popular culture. Recognizably, all forms of mass media—print, cinema, and broadcast—present popular culture. Indeed, the majority of what they spread is covered by the term ‘popular culture’. The material and traditional culture of a certain group of people could be referred to as popular culture. It could also be used to describe cultural items that are consumed by a vast majority of people in a particular society, these include art, literature, music, radio, television, fashion, film, dance and cyberculture. Popular culture is appealing and accessible to a large audience.

The phrase ‘popular culture,’ coined in mid-19th century, refers to the cultural practices of the general public, as opposed to the ‘official culture’ of the governing classes or state. Popular culture is commonly considered as a lower-level or more superficial form of artistic expression, despite its widespread use and qualitative definition today.

Popular Culture: Contextual Explanation

Different conceptions of popular culture make it challenging to define ‘popular’ and ‘culture’ which are fundamentally disputed notions. Six definitions are covered by John Storey in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*. They are:

1. Popular culture is simply a culture that is well liked or widely favoured by many people: it has no negative connotations.
2. Popular culture is whatever is left after ‘high culture’ has been identified: In this definition, popular culture is seen to function as marker of class and status; it is considered inferior.

3. Items of commercial purpose created for mass consumption by persons who do not discriminate are referred to as popular culture. According to this definition, the elites utilize popular culture as a means of repressing or exploiting the general populace.
4. Folk culture, which originates from the people, rather than being forced upon them, is popular culture: Unlike commercial culture, which is imposed on people by commercial enterprises, popular culture is genuine and developed by the people themselves.
5. Popular culture is negotiated; the subordinate classes resist or alter it to some extent, while the dominating classes push it on others. Culture can be created by dominants, but what is retained or abandoned is up to the subordinates.
6. The final description of popular culture that Storey discusses is a suggestion that the line between 'authentic' and 'commercial' is made blurred in the postmodern society of today. Users can accept some created content in today's popular culture, modify it for their own purposes, or reject it completely and produce their own.

Popular culture is presented as a quantitative index in the first definition, which is positioned to appeal to a wide range of individuals. It might also show that a lot of high culture is popular. According to the second definition, it is the culture that remains after we have determined what constitutes high culture. According to this definition, popular culture is a residual category that is used to include cultural texts and practices that don't fit the criteria needed to be classified as high culture. To put it another way, one may say that it defines popular culture as subpar. Attracting mass appeal is how the third definition characterizes popular culture. The argument that popular culture is mass produced for mass consumption by a mass of consumers that are non-discriminating and thus a hopeless commercial culture may be an argument made by those who refer to it as having a mass appeal. According to the fourth definition, popular culture is the culture that comes from the people themselves. It criticizes any strategy that implies popular culture was imposed on the populace from above. This method of working holds that popular culture should only be used to represent a people's true culture. The question of who is eligible to be included in the category of 'the people' has been recognized as a concern with this method. The fact that it avoids the 'commercial' character of many of the resources used to create the culture presents another difficulty. The fifth definition is based on Antonio Gramsci's political analysis, specifically on how he developed the idea of hegemony. Gramsci was an Italian Marxist. According to Gramsci, 'hegemony' refers to the process by which dominant groups in a society try to win over inferior groups by exercising moral and intellectual

leadership. The sixth definition is based on current ideas surrounding the postmodernism controversy. It appears to assert that postmodern culture is one that has lost the ability to create a distinction between high and popular culture.

According to Browne, popular culture encompasses all aspects of life that are not exclusively intellectual or creatively exclusive and that are typically, but not always, spread by the media. Madden adds that “it is anything produced or disseminated by the mass media or mass production or transportation, either directly or indirectly and that reaches a majority of people” (4). Interestingly, the conviction that popular culture is a culture that only developed after urbanization and industrialization unites all of these descriptions, regardless of what else it may be.

Film and Popular Culture

The interface of film and popular culture has significantly influenced the entertainment space. Onuzulike argue that the influence of popular culture on the filmic space can be “interrogated through accents, fashion sense, and peculiarities of behaviour being propagated as stereotypes” (231). He insists that the culture sector has been closely linked to the medium of film. Ibe adds that film, “serves as mirror through which popular culture can be examined . . . The introduction of film significantly altered how people viewed art and popular culture” (155).

In contextualizing the origin of film, Strinati posits that, “apart from the popular press, cinema and radio were arguably the first archetypically modern mass media to emerge, thereby fuelling fears about the commercialization of culture” (4). Ibe observes that “through the emergence of print, radio and film, the ‘popular’ of popular culture, as distinct from the ‘traditional’ of folk culture and the ‘noble’ of high culture was constructed” (152). In further analysis Strinati argues that the “very fact that culture came to be almost infinitely reproducible due to the development of techniques of industrial production posed considerable problems for traditional ideas about the role of culture and art in society” (3). He suggests that the ‘dangerous source of pleasure’ that film offers is incomparable to more conventional creative forms like painting, theatre, and opera. According to Jacob, films are the main form of entertainment in the modern, civilized world. He says that this is made possible by the power of the media since films entail surrender when viewers are hypnotically receptive to the most inexpensive emotional pleas. They are also more seductive and cunning because they are connected to a potent, realistic illusion of real life. Implicitly, the cultural mode that film offers as a result of new mechanical reproduction technologies and altered leisure activity patterns is important in social life.

It's also interesting to note how film allows for the creation of dream worlds and simulations of the real world. This aligns with the view held by Ekpe & Okoronkwo that the operations of the virtual environment have had a significant impact on entertainment in Nigeria, especially because of the interactive and extensive possibilities available. The changes are happening quickly and covertly; signs of these quick changes may be connected to Nigeria's growing internet user base. Kellner argues that film production was arranged appropriately on “an industrial model with a mass-produced output aimed at capturing a secure audience share and thus realizing a substantial profit” (205). Therefore, rather than being an art form, the evolution of film can be linked to its growth as a commercial sector. Early developments of film were from professionals and businesspeople like the Edison Corporation in the United States and the Lumiere Brothers, Melies in France. Film quickly rose to prominence as the most widely used and significant medium in media culture. "The first films included the Lumieres' and Edison's documentaries and quasi-documentary realist fictions as well as Melies' fantasy fictions" (Kellner 205).

Hollywood became the centre of the Western film industry as a result of these firms producing and reiterating formulae that were most successful with the audience due to the consistent demand for film. Following the introduction of sound, Hollywood films expanded into a number of popular genres, such as the western, crime drama, horror film, melodrama, romance comedy, musical and dance film, and more. Describing how films rose to prominence as the most popular form of leisure and amusement, Dieterle argues that:

In fact, during the first half of the 20th century, from 1896 to the 1950s, films were a major source of entertainment and had a profound impact on people's speech, appearance, and behaviour, making them a powerful enculturation tool. Four to five million people visited the more than 10,000 shopfront Nickelodeons in 1910; by 1928, there were roughly 28,000 movie cinemas. By the 1930s, between 85 and 110 million people paid to see movies each week, compared to an average of 25 to 30 million in the 1920s (cited in Kellner 205-6).

This number keeps rising, which makes film a powerful socialization tool that offers guidance and role models in the areas of attire and fashion, courting and love, marriage, and employment. Cinema as a Popular Culture Factory In addition to encouraging the commercialization of the media, early films' portrayal of modern urban social lives and appeal to working-class, immigrant, and metropolitan viewers also garnered criticism from the elite. These films are still viewed as cultural toxins by the elite. "They are seen as a source of pollutants to the sensitive nostrils of the elites who use cultural nationalism as a tool to denounce what they see

as the global exhibition of the soiled and torn cultural fabric" (Shaka 21). As a result, films are regularly attacked. The Legion of Decency, for example, denounced Charlie Chaplin's comedies for ridiculing authoritative people, crime dramas for promoting juvenile delinquency and crime, and love dramas for promoting promiscuity. As demonstrated by the critical stance of the Frankfort school covered in this book, these attacks served as the starting point for popular culture critics. However, there were also positive components of popular culture, such as films. For instance, over the same time period under study (early cinema to the twenty-first century), films served as socialization tools to teach viewers how to be good Americans, behave appropriately, and consume freely and stylishly.

The greatest that has ever been taught or stated, according to the Arnoldian perspective, was simply made popular by films. Adopted in the middle of the 1930s, the Production Code forbade long kisses, nudity, prostitution, and drug use. It also required that criminal elements be punished and that attacks on religion and the church be avoided. This led to the development of the Hollywood studio systems, in which large studios held a monopoly on the patents required for the creation, distribution, and display of motion pictures. As a result, the main goal of cinema production was to maximize profits rather than appeal to the desires, aspirations, and tastes of the general public. Hortense Powdermaker summed up Hollywood as a film industry that creates imaginations and dreams in her 1950 sociological study, *The Dream Factory*. The strange quality of these fantasies and dreams contributes to their popularity. films touch on the major conflicts and problems in society while offering soothing conclusions and assurances.

Film, then, is perhaps the most powerful and approachable medium for expressing modern popular culture. Haynes argues that "Nigerian video films are a prime example of how the global and the local are interpenetrated through transnational commerce in cultural forms . . . and they are a prime instance of African modernity" (2). They increase their ideological force by reflecting the widespread goals and desires of the people in a tailored form and style. According to Kellner, Western films, for instance, "promoted individualism, white male authority figures, and violence as a legitimate way of resolving conflicts and assured audiences that 'civilization' could be maintained in the face of threats from criminals, outsiders, and villains of various sorts" (211). The film media serves as a prism for seeing popular culture.

People's perceptions of art and popular culture were profoundly changed by the invention of film. Despite removing the 'aura of the text,' Benjamin contends that the introduction of film brought consumers closer to popular culture. Benjamin makes the case in his 1973 article, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, that traditional art was special because it

exuded an authenticity that was inexorably tied to a ceremonial function. Nonetheless, there is at least some make-up for the atmosphere that was lost when art was mass-produced:

With its endless replication, new arts forms, and films may now produce emancipatory popular culture where the once sacralised artwork would be "de-sacralised" and "de-aestheticized," becoming more democratic and less bound by mystifying ritual: Mechanical replication frees the artwork from its parasitic need on ritual for the first time in history. (cited in Gregory Castle 68).

Susan Willis calls Benjamin's eulogy of the benefits of mechanically reproducing art and culture prompted by cinema "the single most important essay in the development of Marxist popular culture criticism" (quoted in Storey 69). According to Benjamin, the loss of aura signals ambivalence at the core of contemporary culture and alters the role of culture in society. "The same techniques that strip traditional culture of its authenticity are used to make art available to the general public" (Castle 68). Film is undoubtedly the most potent source of popular culture due to its rich iconography, which makes it simple for various groups to assemble and reassemble cultural symbols, artifacts, and items in an almost infinite number of ways.

As stated by Adorno and Horkheimer, "to demonstrate film's divine nature, reality is always repeated in a purely cynical way. Such a proof is of course not stringent, but it is overpowering . . . whatever a camera reproduces is beautiful" (105). More individuals can now access popular culture thanks to film, this also offers room for a critical examination of the framework used to examine popular culture.

Deconstructing Popular Culture Theories

Notably, the study of any popular culture is constituted in two parts: the viewpoint of the consumers (you, I, and the audience) and the viewpoint of the creators (filmmakers, profit mass media companies, artists and individual auteurs). For the Sociologists, this can be viewed from both perspectives and with a compromise. According to the Critical Theorists, who draw inspiration from Marx as well as conflict theory, the mass media functions as an enterprise that aims to brainwash and enslave people (in this case, the audiences) into apathy and support for the capitalist system of consumption through the consumption of popular culture.

According to critical thinkers, we essentially support capitalism and the current quo by consuming popular culture, which allows us to buy into our own dominance. But according to the Functionalists, culture's function, or purpose, is not as malevolent and self-serving as it

initially seems. Instead, they contend that popular culture offers the same purpose that culture has always provided in societies: it fosters a sense of unity and group cohesiveness and acts as the social bond that holds together members of a social group. This was simple in civilizations with what Emile Durkheim referred to as "mechanical solidarity"; the population was small, the division of labour was simpler, and the society was already the cultural centre. The Functionalist argument is useful in explaining how diverse, large and complicated societies are held together using same idea. Consider how modern collective rituals, such as school football games, induction exercises, and school carnival activities, help to create emotional linkages of trust, identity, and recognition within social groupings and communities.

We (re)establish our connections with each other through these events. Public communication between strangers is made possible by their shared popular culture. Instance could be drawn from a football fan striking up a conversation with a stranger because they wear their favourite team's jersey. In the Nigerian society it is common to see fans of Artists form communities (even with strangers) because of shared interest and likes. These bonds are prevalent both in virtual and physical spaces. There have instances of contest between fans of Davido and those of WizKids; in such circumstances you could read great bonds between strangers who put aside other differences of theirs to concentrate on their shared connections. By having similar norms, we can connect with strangers and foster a sense of unity among people who are familiar with us. This sense of emotional kinship with others shows itself as what sociologists refer to as "emotional energy" (Collins 38). Collins argues that "it is a continuum, ranging from a high end of confidence, enthusiasm, and positive self-feelings to a low end of depression, lack of initiative, and negative self-feelings; down through a middle range of bland normalcy" (108). The warm and fuzzy feeling you receive from spending time with close friends or having thought-provoking conversations with instructors or fellow students is implicitly emotional energy. We maintain relationships with people, even if they are imaginary and have similar tastes in popular culture, for this reason.

Additionally, Collins states that "emotional energy manifests itself both physically and psychologically; but its underlying basis – the form in which it is 'stored,' so to speak – is not as physical energy per se" (119). There is a cognitive component to emotional energy; it is the anticipation that one would be able to control specific situations or operate as a member of specific organizations. According to the cognitive theory, symbols—both specific memories and generic concepts or emblems—have emotional energy associated with them, as seen by the degree of initiative required to use them to enact social interactions.

Relatively, instances could be drawn from situations where one feels oddly connected to total strangers. It could be an exciting moment watching an interesting performance and you find yourself conversing with the stranger seated next to you or singing along with other attendees to one's favourite artist. This powerful emotional force, which Durkheim dubbed "Collective Effervescence," can only be found in sizable gatherings of people who have a common goal (Collins 105). Collins explains that while "communal effervescence is a transient state, it can have longer-lasting benefits when it manifests as individual emotional energy, symbols or sacred artifacts, and sentiments of group unity" (36). It is the reason we go to the cinemas to see a film we can as well watch on television for free or spend money to listen to music we already have. Instead of being miraculously stored in the ones and zeroes of an MP3 or the celluloid of a film, it is social by nature, like all popular culture, and gets its meaning from other people.

Lastly, the Interactionists highlight how we utilize popular culture to understand ourselves, but they also stress how other people influence our preferences, values, and identity in the end. The Interactionists have their interest vested in how people perceive themselves within a larger social context and also behave in the society. They believe that interpersonal interactions and how individuals interpret each other's behaviour could shape and preserve culture. This theoretical standpoint considers human relationships as an evolving process of inferring meaning from both environmental elements and behaviour of the people.

Methodology

This qualitative study adopts ethnography as methodology to address the focus of the study. The adopted approach allows for profound understanding of the social context which surrounds the subject of interest. This is achieved through observation and analysis of data generated from case studies. Importantly, the method gives significant priority to human experience, context, and meaning thereby enabling the researcher to present a complex, nuanced picture of film and popular culture.

Understanding Film and Popular Culture

Film is reckoned to have an interesting stance in the world of entertainment. Ekpe & Akpabio describe film as "the most enchanting narrative medium" (13). The genre that most closely resembles our dreams and realm of endless possibilities. They add that since imagination and creativity are frequently entwined with impartial and biased social constructions, there is little

to no restraint in Nigerian cinema. The emergence of film into the media world was marked with great frenzy; its development and global interface has sustained its relevance and outstanding perspective in the face of media pluralism and struggle for supremacy in the media world. Abodunrin and Akinola note that:

The introduction of feature films has fundamentally changed how information is disseminated in our society. With its widespread accessibility, sense-and-psyche-altering format, and effortless power of persuasion, film has done more than any other media to make reality more fluid in an increasingly post-colonial and post-modern world. (88-9)

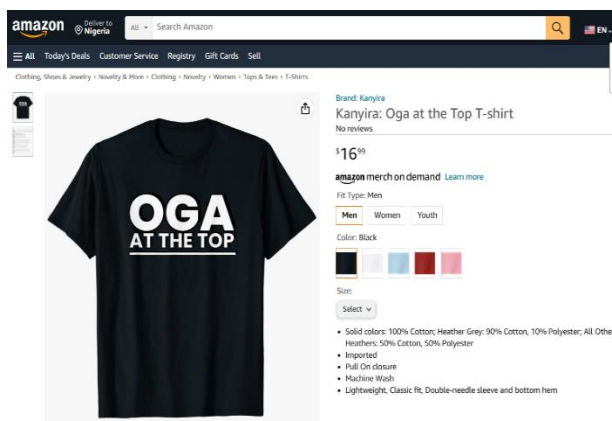
Above standpoint positions the film industry as a content goldmine. The concept of popular culture might be considered a universal phenomenon. Music, TV shows, films, and internet items are among the many forms of media that people consume. The sociological component of popular culture, which is the pervasiveness of popular culture and the mass media, is one of the concept's many intriguing components. Because of their influence on popular culture and our society, media products—particularly films—can help people escape their daily lives. Beyond their current existence, they possess the power to transform lives.

By definition, popular culture's material was intended for broad audiences, primarily middle- and lower-class individuals with a range of educational backgrounds and income levels. As they developed over time, the mass media began to play a crucial role in the production and dissemination of popular culture. Defleur and Dennis argue that “much of the content of the mass media is popular culture that is sold for a profit and integral to the economics of the media” (282). Relatively, Hidetoshi Kato (a Japanese Sociologist) maintains that “the mass media can be seen as one of the most decisive factors shaping the populace of a society” (11). He adds that “the belief systems and behavioural patterns of the younger generation in many societies today are strongly affected by the messages they prefer to receive (or are forced to receive) either directly or indirectly through mass media” (11)

According to popular culture scholars like Stanley J. Baran, Briggs Adam, Copley Paul, and Tom Adaba, films and television have a significant influence on cultural characteristics in the contemporary world. The Modelling Theory, which claims that people will mimic television and film characters and take up their behavioural patterns under specific circumstances, is especially significant. The Cultural Norms Theory, which contends that the media frequently sets the standards or norms that specify what constitutes appropriate behaviour in society, is closely tied to this. Based on these arguments, it can be claimed that films and television have both significantly influenced how many people live their lives. Relatively, Ekpe & Wekpe note

that “the landscape of filmic representation has, over the years, shifted in many interesting ways” (127).

The overwhelming role of popular culture is not limited to the film space. In the Nigerian situation, popular culture trends are reproduced in different fabrics of human existence and communication. Some of these elements originate from consciously and/or unconsciously from celebrities and public office holder and they become a force to reckon with. In some occurrences, their usage spirals beyond the original intent and embrace other meanings. Instance could be drawn from some popular trends that gain reproduction in body wears. The global acceptability of these trends could be related with the platforms in which they are marketed. Reference could be made to the 2013 *My Oga at the Top* trend in Nigeria. The trend manifested in economic gains for entrepreneurs who made body wears that sold in physical shops and also e-commerce platforms (globally reckoned Amazon inclusive).



Oga at the Top t-shirt on sale on Amazon shirt

Source: www.amazon.com



Nigerians dressed in *My Oga at the Top* t-

Source: www.9javoice.wordpress.com

Interestingly too, *The Nigeria Voice* describes *My Oga at the Top* t-shirt as the “Hottest selling t-shirt brand in Nigeria”. Other elements of popular culture that have manifested in huge production of skits, memes, songs, body wears and hashtags include: Aza (2018), Stew (2018), Soro Soke (2020), Mad o (2020; captured in Urban dictionary), Village people (2020), Who dey breeett? (2021), E choke (2021), Chop breakfast/Serve breakfast (2021), You get it! If you don’t gerrit forget about it (2021), We outside (2021), Village people (2021), Cut soap for me

(2021), Werey dey disguise (2021), Sapa (2021), Something hooge (2021), 70 Years old man (2022), Wahala be like bicycle (2022), Dey play (2022; captured in Urban dictionary), Vawlence (2022; captured in Urban dictionary), Yes daddy (2023) and so on.

Dangling between growth supportive outcomes and discouraging factors to learning, some of these trends have come to be used in everyday conversations; sometimes used to replace appropriately situated words and sentences. In the light of global recognition and acceptance, some of them have been absorbed by the English dictionary, admirably so with credits given to the origin (Nigeria). Interestingly too, 20 Nigerian terms and expressions have recently been added to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), Precisely January 2025, in a demonstration of Nigeria's expanding global influence via popular culture, OED added the following Nigerian terms to its update: *adire*, 419, *agbero*, *abi*, *area boy*, *yahoo boy*, *cross-carpet*, *yahoo*, *cross-carpeting*, *suya*, *eba*, *Naija*, *Edo*, *Kobo*, *gele*, *Kanuri*, *jand*, *Japa*, *janded* and *yarn dust*. While it is recognised that popular culture trends in Nigeria do translate to dramatic works in the form of skits, tiktok videos and the likes; a good number do manifest as full filmic products. Some of these popular culture trends that exist as films are:

- **E choke:** A Nigerian singer, songwriter and record producer David Adedeji Adeleke, popularly known as Davido captioned the word 'e choke' in an Instagram post, and crowds including celebrities begun to use the word. E choke is a slang similar to another Nigerian slang – pepper them. It's a catchphrase that suggests flaunting your wealth, success, and happiness—often but not always in front of adversaries who might not be pleased with your accomplishments or closely observe your every action. ***E choke*** literally translates to "it chokes." It is an exclamatory statement meaning anything overwhelming or incredibly remarkable in street slang. Although it may be a little over the top, this slang is a method for Nigerians to show their astonishment when they witness something or someone that goes above and beyond their expectations.

The film, *Echoke* is a fall out of the trend. Produced by Chris Odeh and released in 2021, the film centres on a man's quest to get a wife. It features Zubby Michael, Onny Michael, Nasboi Lowbudget Obo, Victoria Egbuchere, Peace Onuoha, Onyenze Amobi and so on.



Poster of *Echoke* (Part 1)

Source: www.bing.com

Poster of *Echoke* (Part 2)

Source: www.bing.com



Poster of *Echoke* (Part 3)

Source: www.bing.com

- **Dey Play:** The phrase “just dey play” means to continue to have fun, which can also mean to continue wasting your time, and it has become a viral TikTok and Twitter trend at the moment. Users are required to create videos showcasing their successes or new possessions, such as houses or cars. The trend began in Edo State, a state in Nigeria’s south-south geopolitical zone, after a young boy built himself a house and bought a car. He then asked his followers on social media to keep playing, which was ironic because he had accomplished something while they were merely playing online games. As usual, Nigerian social media users are showcasing their success by inserting “just dey play” into as many aspects of their posts as they can, including the promotion of their businesses and rants about other topics. The film *Dey Play* replicates the instance of

the slang while also employing entertainment aesthetics. It was produced by Nollywood Classic TV and released in 2022 and features Onny Michael, Peace Onuoha, Nas boy and other Nigerian actors.



Poster of *Dey Play*

Source: www.bing.com

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Poster of Azaman

Source: www.bing.com



Poster of Azaman & Cubana Girls

Source: www.bing.com

Poster of Azaman and Street Mafians

Source: www.bing.com



Poster of Azaman in Shanty Town

Source: www.bing.com



Poster of *Azaman Ashanti*

Source: www.bing.com

- **Village People:** In Nigeria, the phrase 'Village People' means witches and witchcraft, evildoers, sorcerers, enchanters, etc., that only come from the village, which they believe hinders one's blessing or progress. Suggesting that demons, devils, witches and witchcraft, evildoers, sorcerers, enchanters, etc., exist only in the village (rural areas). Also, since some African pastors always attribute one's problems or failures to have come from the village; it is assumed that any financial hardship or difficulties or severe challenges, is caused by someone from your village who is carrying some enchantment against you.

Some persons regard Village people as enemies of progress that can follow you everywhere, not essentially from the village. When a disaster happens to someone, people are inclined to say, '*your village people still dey after your life.*'

Leaning on this adoption, usage and popularity of the popular culture *Village People*, filmmaking companies Kountry Kulture Network, Film One Entertainment and TMPL Motion pictures set an amazing record with the 2021 film *My Village People*. The film, *My Village People* is officially the 17th Nollywood film to gross over N100 million" claims Precious Nwogu. The movie broke the record after 12 consecutive weeks at the box office, with a total gross of N100,118,350 to date. 'My Village People', which stars Bovi Ugboma as both writer and executive producer, tells the tale of Prince (Bovi), a young man whose wild lifestyle leads him into a strange love triangle with the aquatic world and a coven of witches.

The film was directed by Niyi Akinmolayan and stars Nkem Owoh (Osuofia), Sophie Alakija, Venita Akpofure, Theresa Edem, Binta Ayo-Mogaji, Ada Ameh, Rachel Oniga, Venita Akpofure, Charles Inojie, Zubby Michael, Mimi Onalaja, Amaechi Muonagor, Akah Nnani among others.



Poster of Bovi Ugboma's *My Village People*

Source: www.bing.com

Other film makers have keyed into the 'Village People' syndrome, producing films titled in line with the theme. Amongst such is Ebele Okaro/Harry B/Rhema *My Village People* (2021), Uncle Jay Comedy *The Village People* (2020), Jonas Izuegbu's *The Village People* (2021).



Poster of Uncle Jay's *The Village People* Source: www.bing.com

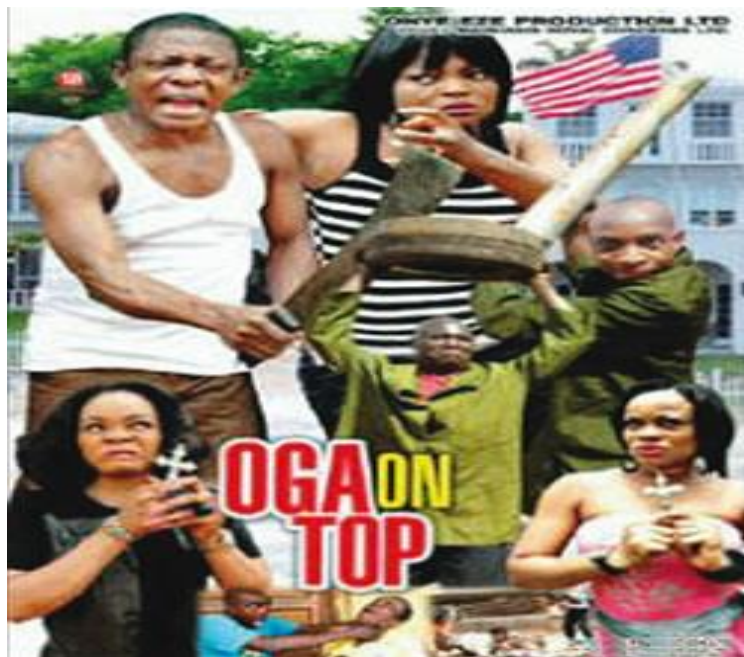
Poster of Jonas Izuegbu's *The Village People* Source: www.bing.com



Poster of Ebele Okaro/Harry B/Rhema *My Village People*

Source: www.bing.com

- **Oga at the Top:** Oga is a Nigerian word, meaning Boss/Top person in charge. Oga at the top is a Nigerian phrase that has become very popular due to an interview with a government official that went viral. The film *Oga on Top* leans on the popularity of the Oga at the Top popular culture. The film was produced by Onye Eze and released in 2013. It features popular Nigerian actor, Nkem Owoh, popularly known as Osuofia.



Poster of *Oga on Top*

Source: www.bing.com

- **Chop Breakfast:** The literal meaning of 'chop breakfast' is to eat breakfast. It means "to have your heart broken" in Nigeria. The most prevalent slang phrase, *everybody go chop breakfast*, implies that everyone will experience heartbreak at some point in their lives; turn by turn. The slang became popularized after the afrobeat star, Burna Boy (a Nigerian singer, songwriter and record producer with real name - Damini Ebunoluwa Ogulu), released his debut single, *Last Last* (in 2022). Since then, the slang gained substantial popularity. Sometimes its interchangeably used with Serve Breakfast.

Keying into the bubbles and gains of the *Breakfast* popular culture, film makers have churned out films in line with the trend. Some of the films include: Oska Film's *Hot Breakfast* (Part 1 and 2); Mercy Johnson's *My Breakfast* (Part 1 to 8).

Released in 2022, *Hot breakfast* is a short film about love and break up, fights and drama. It comes in part 1& 2 and produced by Oska Films.



Snip Shot of *Hot Breakfast*

Source: www.youtube.com

My Breakfast is Mercy Johnson's First movie in 2023 starring alongside Chikamso Ejiofor and Peace Onuoha. It centres on love, relationship, abandonment, and choices.



Poster of *The Breakfast*

Source: www.bing.com

Discussion

This study offers an insight into how Nollywood film makers incorporate social media discourse and trending slangs (popular culture) in the filmic space. By integrating such trending culture, they encourage relatability and digital consciousness. This position also allows for cultural experiences to be immersive even as they are situated within the daily experiences of the Nigerian people. Findings from the study suggest that Nigerian films offer more than the reflection of reality because they also contribute to shaping it. Films have been positioned to contribute to conversational norms as well as regularize discourses. The growth in this regard, have been amplified through the developmental trend of social media platforms. These platforms, such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok and others, help in wide circulation of contents, allowing for audience reaction and interaction which in turn influences the flow of discourse and adaptability. Social media also allows for digital archiving thus sustaining relevance.

The relationship between Nigerian film and popular culture is a two-way street with one shaping the other. Elements from everyday life is weaved into filmic stories in vibrant and interesting ways with social media offering the amplifying function. By incorporating popular culture into filmic narratives, the elements of engagement, relatability and cultural longevity are activated and the film situated as an evolving dialogue of interest.

Conclusion

The currency that popular culture has acquired can be mapped using the increased commercialization of culture brought about by the indigenization and democratization of globally spread communication technology. Film's introduction in 1895 marked the commercialization and popularization of an already-existing culture, which fuelled elite criticism of the rapidly expanding use of film as a means of meaning making. This study

establishes the rise of popular culture within the framework of global media indigenization and cinema. By doing this, the landscape of audiovisual media is positioned as a supporting force for popular culture promotion. Because it both impacts and is influenced by our daily lives, it is discovered that film serves as a material champion of popular culture.

In today's globalized world, popular culture has become important due to its constant growth, especially with the emergence of new technology. Popular culture is currently the primary means by which people learn about themselves, their societies, and the wider world. It has grown closely linked to nearly every element of contemporary society, including education, mass communication, and production. Films have a big influence on people. They possess the ability to influence the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours of others. Film and culture have a complicated relationship; while Nigerian films certainly influence the general public that views them, they are also products of that culture and thus reflect the attitudes, convictions, and issues that are common in society. As a result, the industry itself needs to be extremely aware of the power it has and the significance it has for people's daily lives.

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