

## THEMATIC RELEVANCE OF MUSIC IN NOLLYWOOD MOVIES

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### Abstracts

*The production of a rational film entails a proper utilization of both visual and audio elements to realize effective message delivery via ideal communication. The industry of film is an important tool to humans for mirroring, creating change and for the projection of his perfect world. The Nigerian movie industry has enjoyed so much attention both within and outside the shores of the country i.e Africa, Europe Asia and beyond. The growing popularity that has trailed the industry has been bedeviled with heavy criticism. There has been several calls from different works of life on the contents of the works been produced in great quantity with particular reference to thematic relevance of music in films which is seen by many as significantly ignored by movie producers or not properly placed in sequential arrangement of events or scenes in the play. The major concern of this paper is to understand the thematic relevance of music in Nollywood movies. The study was anchored on Apparatus theory of film. Using the evaluation and survey research designs, the study sampled 150 respondents using questionnaire on multistage sampling design. The study found out that; music is very much relevant in Nollywood movies. Though music are not rightly placed in Nollywood movies. Furthermore, music pre-empts film plots and music in Nollywood film helps in message delivery. It is therefore recommended that movie makers and stakeholders in the Nollywood should make use of music in their movies in a more objective and innovative manner.*

**Keywords:** Theme, Nollywood, Films, Music and Message

### Background

Movies as an integral medium for mass communication cannot be over emphasized. Home video gives it viewers an insight and imaginary vision. The art of communication in movies is propelled by the visual and audio elements.

While visual simply refers to the things we can feel and touched e.g. make up, custom, light etc. the auditory in film are referred to the items that the audience cannot see but they can hear some of which are; sound, conversation, monologue, and musical aesthetic.

Music however, is an indispensable element in film production process as it entails powerful film skills, which when rightly used, lubricates communication in movies. That is why, when watching a film, the audience adapts with the changes in music and the music been played which is in line with the events in the movie story. However, musical themes have not hugged the headlines and seem to be a downplayed phenomenon in the production of films. Little wonder Bordwell and Thompson (2004) assert that film cannot be stopped to freeze an instant of music, just as one can study a frame to scrutinize scenic presentation and cinematography; neither can we sieve out a song or music for our scrutiny as simply as one can inspect the editing of sequence shots.

In the works of Emelobe (2008) he postulated that, video films in Nigeria utilize narrative styles that are usually poor, acting majorly over low quality and exaggerated pictures that are juxtaposed with un-rhythmic audios and songs without thematic message. Emelobe (ibid) opines that, music is regarded as a part or a subset in the whole. But in as much as this statement might be regarded, contemporary nollywood films have shown that there has been a great deal of change in acting, narrative styles, and visual representation of reality. Emelobe (2008, p.264)

Notwithstanding, songs with thematic relevance or implication still has grey areas as it still leaves alot to be desired in the film industry in Nigeria. Nigerian filmmakers do not take cognizance of music with themes. In Nigeria, so many movie producer and production houses do not carefully consider the right music, its effects and theme during production planning. Here, they only use any music they choose without putting into cognisance the thematic implication of the song in respect to the film (anything goes). Contrary to Hollywood Films, there has been a great development in sound recording and choice of songs. Dolby noise reduction process and four-and Six-track theatre songs are one major development to reckon with in foreign movies. Platoon of the Dead and Star Wars which where all produced in 2009, with their stereo and surround channels has shown that viewers appreciate quality music tracks and music with related themes. No one is disputing the fact that Nigerian movies has made a great

influence or impact on Nigerian viewers, as this movies are most times based on our cultural inclinations and they mostly addresses the people on their problems in a manners that they can easily relate and understand. Ones understanding of these movies sometimes depend on how one perceives the filmmaker's idea and how well he or she relates with the themes and musical interpretation of the songs in relation to the film. However, the thematic relevance of these songs used remains questionable.

### **Statement of Problem**

In laying the foundation of this study, it was captured that music serves the function of communicating a message through story-telling and transferring emotions of a film to its viewers. The production of a rational film entails a proper utilization of both visual and audio elements to realize effective message delivery via ideal communication. The industry of film is an important tool to humans for mirroring, creating change and for the projection of his perfect world. The Nigerian movie industry has enjoyed so much attention both within and outside the shores of the country i.e Africa, Europe Asia and beyond. The growing popularity that has trailed the industry has been bedeviled with heavy criticism. There has been several calls from different works of life on the contents of the works been produced in great quantity with particular reference to thematic relevance of music in films which is seen by many as significantly ignored by movie producers or not properly placed in sequential arrangement of events or scenes in the play (plot). The major concern of this paper is to understand the thematic relevance of music in Nollywood movies.

### **Study objectives**

This study amongst other thing set out to achieve three objectives which include the following;

1. To understand if music is rightly used in Nollywood films
2. To determine if music pre-empts film plots
3. To find out if music enhances message delivery in film

### **Literature Review**

Earliest films debuted around 1890, before the advent of technologies that allows synchronization of images with sound (Buhler *et. al.*2010).

Though, forerunners of electronic music such as Wendy Carlos who for long have been creating for film from the late 60s, pop and electronic artists are only starting to get recognized as music composers in their own right. With the likes of Daft Punk original song for Tron "Legacy" in 2010 was the watershed of the mainstream (Anderson, 2012). Gillick and Bamman (2018) allude that music tracks have an integral role in conveying the picture or story of a film.

In their article about psychological impact of music on audience, Parker & Fischhoff (2005) pointed that the viewer need not know what the music entails. He is more concerned with how it makes him feel. Ibid (2013), further notes that the average film viewer, gives little or no attention (i.e. granted) to musical accompaniment if songs with thematic relevance are not properly placed in film.

This goes without saying that in as much as music is a germane factor and an element to communicate emotions, the song in a movie should know where it is to be juxtaposed with other film elements. Contrary to concert where songs are composed and played for audience who come explicitly for the purpose of listening to music, music in films should preferably be treated with distinctively from musicals made exclusively for shows.

Film as a medium is often likened to a canonical example of narrative multimodality; it combines both pen down narrative of dialogue and visual imagery. While words alone cannot bear the burden for creating good characters, scene, in textual formats e.g. literary novels. In films, this duty is divided by each member, including the screen writer, director, music supervisor, effects technologist, etc (Gillick and Bamman, 2018).

There is no gain saying, that music is an integral, and indispensable weapon in the armory of contemporary filmmaker; however, music did not play out its importance in film so easily. Not until the 1930s where music was reckoned with; when it was purposely and specifically used for films (this implies that music is exclusively written to compliment on-screen actions). Therefore, except the song is specifically made to accompany music tracks in order to promote the film, music directly used for screen cannot exist on its own without the film.

### **Placement of Music in Nollywood films**

According to Ajiwe and Chukwu Okoronkwo (2015), songs may not be noticed when watching a movie. It however connotes a strong technique which when appropriately used helps in message delivery in film. This is why audiences react

to changes in sound and is in line with the action depicted in the film. Yet sound seems to be relegated to the background in film production and analysis.

In respect to the use of music and emotion, Prendergast (1992) outlines two schools of thought: the cognitive theories that posit that music only stand for emotional meaning and cannot arouse its listener. While on the other hand, the Emotive school of thought argues that music often do arouse emotional response.

As confusing as this theory may seem, it should be underscored that music only seeks to do one thing; it is to prick our emotions. It is a non intellectual interaction between the unconscious mind and the song being played.

In the works of Stuart (2005), where he talked about the psychological effect of music on its viewers, he note that, "The audience is not concern with what the music stands for, rather he is concerned with how it makes him feel".

### **Music and message delivery in Nollywood films**

Although the Nigerian film produce quality Film stories, the poor treatment of music in these films can be traced to poor technical knowhow on how to manipulate effects and the use of aesthetics in sound. Unlike the Comic movies produced where the use of technique and sound are salient which has helped in understanding the comic films and the way there shots are harnessed together with the music and its effects (Ajiwe and ChuKwu, 2015).

Songs in films may not necessarily contribute in creating emotional response from viewers, but equally affects the viewer's judgement of the visual content of the film. That is why the treatment of music becomes necessary so the viewers can appreciate their physical world. In a nut shell, music in films requires perceptive positing in other to convey a coherent message.

### **Thematic placement of music in plots**

Sound effects and music are accompaniment to characters in films. This is why Bodwell and Thompson (2004), posit that rhythm connotes little of beat, tempo, pace, pulse and pattern of accent that are the main features of any musical composition. These characteristics are equally identifiable in music in films where speech creates a rhythm in which characters are easily identified by their

voice prints. These do not only show characteristic frequencies and amplitudes, it is equally different in pattern of pacing and syllabic stress.

For example, the reverberating tune of a gong which may offer a slow but dying accent is different from the fast paced rhythmic beats from a local drum that give an exciting impression. This is why the rhythmic use of music is often at time complicated as it often requires the harmonious synchronization of both image and sound thus giving the music a thematic relevance.

The end of this is that musical theme is related with some aspects of the film narrative in so doing; music in the film will be enhanced with its own narrative based on the story of the film. Hence, it becomes paramount for film producers to give more attention to music used in the movie produced which in turn gives it a good overall quality.

### **Methodology**

In general, the reason for a research is a determinant of its design, target population, methodology and methods of data analysis. Consequently, this particular research, on the thematic relevance of music in Nollywood movies, is simultaneously an evaluation research and employs survey as its research design. The study is an evaluation research because it seeks to evaluate the relevance of music in Nollywood movies. Furthermore, the study employed survey design as it collected and analyzed quality data from a sub-set of the research population. The research population is the population of interest which could provide the desired information on relevance of music in Nollywood movies. A structured questionnaire on four-Likert was validated and used in this research.

### **Research Population**

A population is termed as finite when it consists an identifiable number of recognized units. The identifiable number is known as the population size. For this study, the population is made up of Nigerians, aged 18 years and above who patronize the Nollywood movies. The sample size was drawn from the target population to get the desired information.

### **Sample and Sampling Design**

Inferences about the population can be made on the basis of a properly designed and well selected sample. Moreover, the representative sample was derived from the research population using a statistics-backed and efficient sampling method. Drawing out of sample size is a frequent activity in a research; unsuitable or poor population sample continues to dabble with the validity and reliability of a research. The method for determining the representative sample for a study is hinged on a level of significance and a determined error margin is as follows (Levy & Lemeshow, 2015).

$$n = \left( \frac{Z_{\alpha/2}}{2\delta} \right)^2 = \left( \frac{1.96}{2 \times 0.08} \right)^2 = 150$$

$n$ =Sample size and  $\delta=0.08$ ( margin of error of the study). The value of the standard normal ordinate at  $\alpha\%$  level of significance is  $Z_{\alpha/2}$ . At the 5% level of significance,  $Z_{\alpha/2} = Z_{0.025} = 1.96$ . Hence, the sample size of 150 was used to determine a sampling error of at most 8%. An effective sampling strategy was used in order to reduce non-response and response error to the barest minimum. In this strategy, the questionnaires not returned or not properly filled were replaced with new ones in order to maintain an effective sample size of 150.

The multistage sampling design was used. In the first stage, a sample of one state was selected while in the second stage a sample of one Local Government Area was selected. Consequently, in the third and final stage, a simple random sample of 150 respondents was selected.

The one-samplet-test and descriptive statistics were used for data analysis. All data generated in this study would particularly be analyzed by IBM SPSS version 23 throughout. The test value for the one-sample t-test is 2.5 since the questionnaire is on four-Likert scale.

### **Result and Discussion**

The results from the study are presented an analyzed as follows.

**Table 1: Summary Statistics**

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Music is relevant in	65	53	18	14	150

Nollywood Movies	(43.3%)	(35.3%)	(12.0%)	(9.3%)	(100%)
Music are rightly placed in Nollywood Movies	23	56	62	9	150
Music Pre-Empts Film Plots	(15.3%)	(37.3%)	(41.3%)	(6.0%)	(100%)
Music in Nollywood Film helps in message delivery	79	41	25	5	150
	(52.7%)	(27.3%)	(16.7%)	(3.3%)	(100%)
	39	82	17	12	150
	(26.0%)	(54.7%)	(11.3%)	(8.0%)	(100%)

From table 1 above, it can be said that a total of 78.6% of the sampled agreed that music is relevant in Nollywood movies. Similarly, a total of 52.6% of the sampled population agreed that music are rightly placed in Nollywood movies. Furthermore, a total of 80.0% of the sampled population agreed that music pre-empts film plots. Lastly, a total of 80.7% of the sample agreed that music in Nollywood film helps in message delivery.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics**

Items	N	Mean	SD	Remark
Music is relevant in Nollywood Movies	150	3.13	0.957	Agree
Music are rightly placed in Nollywood Movies	150	2.62	0.817	Agree
Music Pre-Empts Film Plots	150	3.29	0.863	Agree
Music in Nollywood Film helps in message delivery	150	2.99	0.835	Agree

As depicted in table 2, since the standard deviations across all items are reasonably small, the mean values could be used sufficiently to represent each item. Hence, the mean statistics shall be used as the measure of location for the summary of responses. On an average, the sampled population agreed, with a mean value of 3.13, that music is relevant in Nollywood movies. Similarly, on an average, the sample population agreed with a mean value of 2.62, that music is rightly placed in Nollywood movies. Furthermore, on an average, the sampled population agreed with a mean value of 3.29, that music pre-empts film plots. Lastly, on the average, the respondents agreed with a mean value of 2.99, that music in Nollywood film helps in message delivery.

**Table 3: One-Sample t-Tests**

Items	Test Value = 2.5
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	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Music is relevant in Nollywood Movies	8.016	149	0.000	0.627
Music are rightly placed in Nollywood Movies	1.800	149	0.074	0.120
Music Pre-Empts Film Plots	11.253	149	0.000	0.793
Music in Nollywood Film helps in message delivery	7.135	149	0.000	0.487

From table 3 above, the inferential analysis has revealed that music is relevant in Nollywood movies ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, it can be concluded that music are very important when it comes to movies especially in Nollywood films as they keep the viewers well entertained and also serve as effect to actions that are portrayed on screen. This goes side by side with the accretion of Jonathan Demme, which Bordwell and Thompson (2004) cited that mood can be expressed as an element of the numerous importance of music in movies. It is on the basis of appropriateness in music use that a film pricks the emotions of audiences, by the virtue of what they feel and see on their screens.

On the other hand, the inferential analysis has revealed that music are not rightly placed in Nollywood movies ( $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, most songs are not rightly placed in Nollywood movie. This also corroborates the views of Thompson (2004) where he asserts that, the use of music in the creation of the mood of a film compliments the void that cannot be visually achieved. This is however on the basis of how makers of film utilize music and effects from music to juxtapose images. This therefore means that instrumentation, harmony, tempo and melody of music can sturdily affect the audiences' reactions emotionally. It is on the back of the sort of instrumentation and time of the music well-fitted to a particular action, thereby causing the viewers' mind to muse on the actions in the film that pricks their emotions.

Furthermore, the inferential analysis has revealed that music pre-empts film plots ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, it can be deduced that music in Nollywood films mostly pre-empt the plot of the film. This however has a great effect on the quality of the film produce and as well on its patronage. As a result of this, Nigerian youths prefer western films to home movies because of their production quality. This assertion goes hand in hand with the views of Davies

(1999) were he posits that a good film song is not tied to penning good music; it is writing good score that is an apt accompaniment of on-screen action, keeping its audience on suspense, and at the same time enthusiastic for the next scene. This entails discovering the heart and soul of film and capturing it in music instead of revealing it all even before the film is midway. Furthermore, a single musical theme has the power to transform the quality of a film when associated with different situations. This is dependent on the varying tempo of a music utilized at the various scenes or actions. If the tempo and rhythm of the music employed at a particular time or scene is high or lifting tempo, it conveys something gloomy at serene and comforting environs. Thus, the switch from a higher tempo to a lower tempo and one musical genre to another in tandem with the action in a film is a rhythmic and harmonic choice that aids merge film indicating the change from a period to another, however, this technique is not rampant in Nollywood films. Directors do not have the technical know-how in relation to song placement in scenes.

Lastly, the inferential analysis has revealed that music in Nollywood film helps in message delivery ( $p < 0.05$ ). This can therefore be deduced that music in Nollywood films helps in message delivery. This goes hand in hand with the views of Bordwell and Thompson (2004) were they opine that; music in films may not only aid in inducing emotional responses in audiences, but can also influence viewer's perception about the visual contents of a film. Therefore, treatment of music often exists not in the audiences' social, but in their physical world too. In essence, music in narrative films are strategically positioned to deliver a lucid message. In other words, music in films affects audiences' perceptions of the film narrative. Music in any vague content of film toward a character of the film narrative affects the understanding of the plot by audiences. The opening sequence of a film (the opening images) is very crucial because they offer a lot of clues as to what the film will be about.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Music is an integral part in film as a production. The type of music used in a film must serve the rationale of proficiently communicating the emotions and delivering the messages effectively. It must as well have a message it aims at passing across to its audience. Filmmakers in Nigeria's film industry must strive to get produce films that captures diversity and multiculturalism. This will in hugely contribute to the general development of the sector. This would also give

the Nollywood industry an important edge over rival national industries in an expansive international market. This research work has revealed that music is relevant in Nollywood movies. Though music are not rightly placed in Nollywood movies. Furthermore, music pre-empts film plots and music in Nollywood film helps in message delivery. It is therefore recommended that movie makers and stakeholders in the Nollywood should make use of music in their movies in a more objective and innovative manner.

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