

IMAGE OF THE NIGERIA POLICE FORCE IN NIGERIAN HOME MOVIES

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Abstract

Home videos consist of different story lines. Some present issues, personalities and organizations in good light while in some, they are presented negatively and in bad light. This study examines the portrayal of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) in Nigerian home movies with a view to finding out whether movies about the police force leave a good or bad impression of the police in the minds of citizens. The research setting is Awka, the capital city of Anambra state, Nigeria. The study was anchored on two theories- Framing and Reception theories. Mixed methodologies of survey and content reviews were adopted in the study. In survey, a sample size of 400 respondents was drawn using Taro Yamane Formula while a multi-stage sampling technique was used to select them. In content review, the film "Mission to Nowhere" which is a police-centred film was selected and reviewed. The result of the study showed that the residents perceive the police image as corrupt not because of how they are being portrayed in home videos, but because of experience from family and friends, personal experience or peer groups. The study also established that the negative portrayals of the police in the home movies due not in any way affect their overall performance in their statutory duties as they are always undeterred by them. The study recommended intensified public relations practice by the police to enhance their image and research of story lines by the film producers before production.

Keywords: police, portrayal, image, home video, perception, Ukwueze

INTRODUCTION

It has become a very common occurrence to see the police force portrayed in Nigerian home movies in diverse ways ranging from the noble to the very silly. Exposure of the audience to portrayals of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) might in one way or the other influence how they assess the NPF or even shape their opinions. Most of these portrayals could promote or destroy the image of the police. Most of the home video audiences are not aware that they are constantly deciding the value, prestige, respect and power of the NPF based on the various images of the police as portrayed in home movies. This means that the image of the police could be enhanced or marred through home movies. What psychological assessments have Awka home movie audience made concerning the NPF based on the pictures these portrayals put on their heads is the focus of this study.

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Home movies could be seen as a form of media technology, cultural force, entertainment and an intriguing business. Having began in the late 19th century as simple individual or small group peep shows, home movies have developed into increasingly sophisticated and complex presentations of moving images even as viewers' demand caught up with technological progress (Mgbejume, 1989).

Despite the progress of home movies as media technology, they still maintain the basic elements (such as; theme, setting, characterization etc) which they share with other art forms. In spite of the shared elements, home movies, as means of entertainment, differs from other forms of art in the sense that they enact a story or attempt to repeat the actions of past life events through a sequence of images that give the illusion of continuous movement and reality.

The home movie industry comprises the technological and commercial institutions of home movie-making, which include; production companies, home movie studios, screenwriting, film festivals, distribution, actors, home movie directors and other home movie crew personnel.

According to a 2010 Guardian (UK) newspaper report, the Nigerian home movie industry, termed Nollywood, is now the second largest in the world having been inspired by Bollywood and Brazilian soap Operas. This means that apart from being popular, Nollywood has truly become unique and lucrative (Guardian, UK).

Similarly, UNESCO reports say Nollywood makes about 2,400 films per year putting it ahead of United States of America, but behind India. Nigerian home movie makers tend to operate in a fast and furious manner, shoots rarely lasts longer than two weeks and cheap digital equipments are almost always used, which are manned most times by persons without professional training, and the average budget is about ₦2.4million (The Economist 2006).

Most finished home movies often bypass cinemas altogether and are instead, sold directly to the "man on the street" for about N100. Most home movies shift between 25,000 and 50,000 original copies although a blockbuster can easily sell up to 200,000 thereby creating between 4.1 – 83.3% profit depending on the quality of content and distribution success.

In the last two decades, Nollywood portrayal of the NPF has impacted both positively and negatively on the police image. Recently, home movies have become an integral part of NPF image crisis rather than serve as management tool based on some scandalous representations of the Force in them. According to a 2010 Punch newspaper report, Former Inspector General of Police, Mike Okiro, at a meeting with senior officers of the force in Abuja, lamented the way police men were being paraded in some scripts as monsters even as he expressed his disgust concerning the indiscriminate use of police uniform and equipment by Nigerian home-movie makers pointing-out that the way and manner policemen are portrayed in Nigerian home movies do not relate to facts on ground.

Based on the above report, this study was done to ascertain Awka residents' assessment of NPF in home movies with a view to ascertaining if it has actually inflicted much damage to the people's perception of their overall image.

Awka is the capital city of Anambra State, with an estimated population of 301,657 according to 2006 National Population Commission report. The city is sited in a fertile tropical valley that lies below 300 metres above sea level.

Awka has a total of 33 villages inhabited by people whose socio-economic existence primarily revolves around government and civil service since many federal and state institutions are located there.

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

The escapades of the police force are something that does not need introduction in Nigeria. Also the nollywood audiences do not need to be reminded about the activities of this aforementioned group because they are also part of Nigeria. We have seen, heard or even read about the stories concerning the police in real life, newspapers, and discussions with friends and in Nigeria home movies too.

Most home movies have carried their opinion on Nigerian police force with sources of their scripts being either by personal experience, fictions, heard or read stories etc.

Now the question is: What is the Awka audience assessment of the portrayal of the image of the Nigerian police force in Nigerian home movies? Do these portrayals have effects on Awka audience perception of the Force? Can the reactions of Awka audience towards Nigerian police force be traced to what they

see in Nigerian home movies or other sources? What has been the picture of Nigerian police force painted by nollywood movies is it positive or negative? Are the Awka audience's actions towards Nigerian police force all about their experiences, discussions, heard/read stories, or the result of portrayal of Nigerian police force in nollywood home movies? The curiosity generated from all these questions resulted in this study.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The general purpose of this study is to ascertain if Awka residents' perceptions of the Police are based on how the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) is portrayed in Nollywood home videos. Against this backdrop, the study was necessitated by the following specific objectives:

- 1) To find out how Awka residents perceive the image of the Nigeria Police Force.
- 2) To ascertain whether the residents of Awka like watching Police-centred Nollywood home videos.
- 3) To determine if the perception of Awka residents of Police Force is determined by their portrayal in Nigerian home movies.
- 4) To find out, if the negative portrayals of Nigerian Police Force by Nollywood home movies affect police performance in their daily duties.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were posed for the study:

- 1) How do Awka residents perceive the image of the Nigeria Police Force?
- 2) Do Awka residents like watching Police- centred nollywood home movies?
- 3) Are perceptions of Awka residents of the Police Force determined by their portrayal in Nigerian home movies?
- 4) Do the negative portrayals of the Nigeria Police Force in Nollywood home movies affect police performance in their daily duties?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on two communication theories namely; the Framing Theory and the Reception Theory. The framing theory is related to the agenda-setting tradition but expands the research by focusing on the essence of the issues at hand in the society that call for attention rather than on just a particular topic. The basis of the theory is that the media focuses attention on certain events and then places them within a field of meaning. Framing is an important topic since it can have a big influence and therefore the concept of framing expanded to organisations as well. The police organisation in Nigeria under review in this study becomes a focus to ascertain how their frames by Nigerian home movies determine their image and perception by the members of the local audience.

In essence, framing theory as first propounded by Goffman under the title Frame Analysis suggests that how something is presented to the audience (called "the frame") influences the choices people make about how to process that information. Frames are abstractions that work to organize or structure message meaning. They are thought to influence the perception of the news by the audience, in this way it could be construed as a form of second level agenda-setting – they not only tell the audience what to think about (agenda-setting theory), but also how to think about that issue (second level agenda setting, framing theory).

Ekwuazi (1987) agrees that the film can be used for indoctrination as did the colonial government and that the same medium can also be used by indigenous film makers for counter indoctrination.

Framing techniques as identified by Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) are:

- Metaphor: To frame a conceptual idea through comparison to something else.
- Stories (myths, legends): To frame a topic via narrative in a vivid and memorable way.
- Tradition (rituals, ceremonies): Cultural mores that imbue significance in the mundane, closely tied to artifacts.
- Slogan, jargon, catchphrase: To frame an object with a catchy phrase to make it more memorable and relate-able.

- Artifact: Objects with intrinsic symbolic value – a visual/cultural phenomenon that holds more meaning than the object it self.
- Contrast: To describe an object in terms of what it is not.
- Spin: to present a concept in such a way as to convey a value judgement (positive or negative) that might not be immediately apparent; to create an inherent bias by definition.

Framing is the way a communication source defines and constructs a any piece of communicated information. Framing is an unavoidable part of human communication – we all bring our own frames to our communications and in this case, the way the movie makers frame the Nigeria Police Force in the home movies is analysed with respect to the resultant image and perception.

The Reception Theory on the other hand is a theory traced backed to the work of a British Sociologist Stuart Hall and his communication model first reviewed in an essay titled “Encoding/Decoding” (Hall, 1980). Reception media theory takes closer look at what is actually going on when an audience encounter media text. It provides an analysis of how audiences perceive a certain media message, what meanings do they derive, how do they associate to it, and what effect does that message or text has on their psychological, personal and social make-up (Jones, 2013).

In line with this, Awka audiences who expose themselves to home movies with themes on policing and security may do this by ascribing meanings and having their own perspectives from the content they are viewing with respect to the image of the Force.

There is presently public outcry on the undeserving emphasis of some local films whose themes centre on violence, fetishism, police brutality, corruption, debased morals and get-rich-quick syndrome. The fear being expressed is that they may have a backlash effect on the Nigerian society, if not dent the cultural image of the nation (Ukwueze and Ekwugha, 2013, p.179).

Methodology

The methodology adopted for this study was survey coupled with a brief content review of on a police-centred movie titled *Mission to Nowhere*. The study setting is Awka town, the capital of Anambra State. The area is considered ideal for this study being an urban area and a state capital where it is assumed that media access and exposure rate should be high, especially for television and films.

The population is made up of all the residents of Awka which according to 2006 census is 189,645 people. The population is spread in 33 villages that make up the town. The village setting is a mere geographical parameter and does not in any way diminish its urban status as a state capital.

The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane formula thus:

$$n = \frac{N}{(1 + N (e)^2)}$$

Where

n = Sample size

N = Population

e = Margin of error = 0.05 in social science research

$$\therefore n = \frac{189654}{(1 + 189654 (0.05)^2)}$$

$$= \frac{189654}{(1 + 189654 \times 0.0025)}$$

$$= \frac{189654}{1 + 474.135} = \frac{189654}{475.135} = 399.158$$

A round number of 400 became the sample size for this study.

The multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the study. At the first stage, 16 villages were chosen from the 33 villages that make up Awka through simple random procedure. The second stage involved

the selection of 25 households from each of the 16 villages while the third stage involved selecting one respondent from each of the households selected.

Table 1: Multi-stage sampling procedure

Stage	Selection	Total
1 st stage	16 villages from 33 villages in Awka	16 x 1 = 16
2 nd stage	25 households from each of the 16 villages	25 x 16 = 400
3 rd stage	One person from each of the 400 households selected in Awka	1 x 400 = 400

The data collection instrument was the questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire centered on the demographics of the respondents while the rest of the questions are framed such that they provided answers to the research questions. Data were analysed using tables and percentages.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data collected for the study were analyzed by simple statistical tools such as frequency tables and percentage estimations.

The respondents’ demographic information was measured using question item 1-3 in the questionnaire (see appendix). Data generated from the responses were presented in the following tables and figures.

Figure 1:

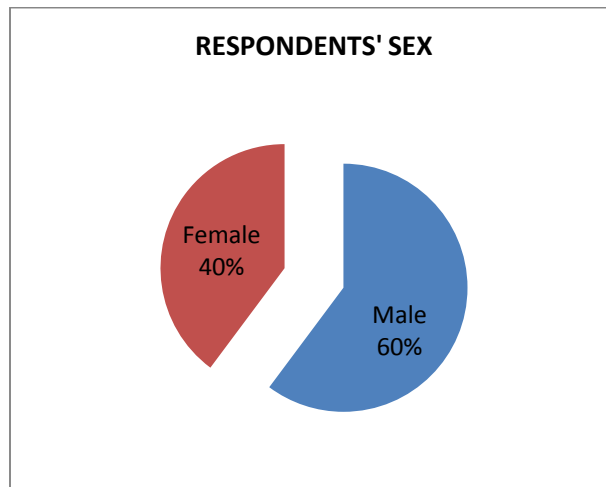


Figure 1 above shows that a greater percentage of the respondents were males 240(60%) and the smaller percentage were females 160(40%)

Table 2: Respondents age range

Variable category	Age range	Frequency	Percentage
Respondents age range	16-21	92	23.00%
	22-27	97	24.25%

	28-33	98	24.50%
	34 and above	113	28.25%
Total		392	100%

From table 2 above, data show that 92(23.00%) were in the age range of 16-21; 97(24.25%) were in the age range of 22-27; 98(24.50%) were in the age range of 28-33 and 113(28.25%) were in the age range of 34 years and above. This shows that the age range of 16-21 had the lowest number of respondents and 34 and above had the highest number of respondents and form the greatest segment of Awka movie audience.

Table 3: Respondents occupation

Variable category	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Respondents occupation	Traders	104	26.00%
	Professionals	88	22.00%
	Civil servants	69	17.25%
	Students	45	11.25%
	Others	94	23.50%
Total		400	100%

From table 3 above, it shows that the greatest number of respondents were traders 104(26.00%) while the smallest number of respondents 45(11.25%) were students and the others are professionals 88(22.00%), civil servants 69(17.25%) and others 94(23.50%).

Table 4:

How many residents of Awka metropolis watch NPF centred home videos?

NPF-centred Movies	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	252	63
No	140	35
Invalid response	8	2
Total	400	100

Table 4 above shows that 63 percent or 252 respondents said they watch NPF-focused Nollywood home videos while 35 percent or 140 said “No” and 2 percent or 8 of the total responses were considered invalid responses by the researchers.

Table 5:

Do Awka residents think Nigerian home video portrayal of the NPF influence their perceptions of the Police in Nigeria?

Influence of NPF movies on Awka residents perceptions	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	172	43
No	204	51
Don't know	24	6
Total	400	100

Table 5 reveals that 204 representing 51 percent of the respondents affirmed “No” that the NPF portrayal in Nigerian home movies does not influence their perception of the police. A total of 172 representing

43 percent of the respondents said yes that the home movies’ portrayal of the force do influence their perceptions of the police while 24 representing 6 percent were undecided.

Table 6:

How do Awka residents perceive the image of the Nigerian police force generally?

Respondents’ perception of Nigeria police force	Frequency	Percentage %
Effective	44	11
Corrupt	272	68
Don’t know	84	21
Total	400	100

Table 6 indicates that 272 or 68 percent of the respondents perceive the police image as being corrupt. A total of 44 representing 11 percent perceive the police generally as effective and efficient while 84 representing 21 percent are undecided. In some films however, policemen are portrayed as very effective and efficient especially in investigation of crimes but that does not always change the general negative perception of the police image as corrupt and in most cases brutal. The audience already has a mindset which is not affected most often by the media frames of the Police.

Table 7:

How did Awka residents form their opinion of the Police Force?

Means through which respondents formed their opinion concerning the NPF	Frequency	Percentage %
Personal experience	152	38
Family and friends	96	24
Movies/mass media	116	29
Peers	44	11
Total	400	100%

Table 7 reveals that despite the relative influence of home movies on audience perception of reality and opinion formation processes, most people still rely on personal experiences when forming their opinions especially of the Nigerian police force. This is because 152 representing 38 percent of the respondents said they formed their opinion of the Nigerian police force through their personal experiences while 96 representing 29 percent attributed their opinions as emanating from the NPF centred movies or mass media they have exposed themselves to. A total of 96 representing 24 percent attributed it to other agents of socialization like family and friends while 44 amounting to 11 percent to peer group influence.

Table 8:

Do negative portrayal of the Nigeria Police Force in Nigerian home videos affect their performance in their daily duties?

Influence of NPF negative portrayal in home videos on their performance	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	164	41
No	212	53
Don’t know	24	6
Total	400	100

Table 8 above shows that majority of the respondents up to 212 representing 53 percent said no to the assumption that the negative portrayals of the Police Force in Nigeria home movies do affect their overall performance in their daily routine duties. They rather push on and are undeterred in performance of their statutory functions. A total of 164 amounting to 41 percent said yes, that the negative portrayals do influence police performance while 24 representing 6 percent are undecided.

Discussion of Data relevant to Research Questions

Research Question 1:

How do Awka residents perceive the image of the Nigeria Police Force?

Data presented in table 6 shows that majority of Awka residents up to 68 percent perceive the Nigeria Police as corrupt. This is a very negative image for a force that battles the recurring incidences of crime in Nigeria.

Research Question 2:

How many among the residents of Awka watch NPF centred home movies?

From the table 4 above, it can be gathered that a majority of Awka residents up to 63 percent watch NPF-centered home videos. This is an indication of high exposure to film medium.

Research Question 3:

Does Nollywood portrayal of police influence Awka residents' perception of the NPF?

Data presented in table 5 shows that majority of the residents in Awka amounting up to 51 percent agreed that NPF portrayal in Nigeria Home video does not influence their perception of the Nigerian police. Table 7 also confirmed this by showing other sources of the negative perception of the police as emanating from personal experiences, family and friends and peer group influence.

Research Question 4:

Do negative portrayals of the Nigeria Police Force in our home videos influence their performance in their daily duties?

Data presented in table 8 shows that majority of respondents up to 53 percent were of the view that the negative portrayals of the Police Force in our home videos do not affect their overall performance in their statutory duties. They are rather not psychologically affected by these portrayals while discharging their duties.

Review of Police-Centred Movies *Mission to Nowhere*

Nollywood (Nigeria Film Industry) has added a new police-centered film to its catalogue called *mission to nowhere*, produced by Teco Benson and is hailed as interesting, informative and educative. The police-centered movie is good barring amateurish acting and less than professional handling of the production elements.

The plot of "*Mission to Nowhere*" revolved around the murder of Mrs. Naomi Adams, a top Nigerian society lady inside her study room by an unknown assassin. Coincidentally, the nation was undergoing a democratic transition and late Adams happened to be the estranged wife of John Adams, the most vital political opponent of the current administration. The determination to get to the root of the murder made the Nigerian police to work tirelessly in order to bring the murderer to book because the nation was already in a political disability as a result.

The investigation unit led by Sam Dede interrogated everybody that is connected to the woman including the deceased boyfriend's daughter, gateman etc, in a bid to leaving no stone unturned. But their investigation did not yield any result, and this made Sam Dede to be confused with the whole situation coupled with the pressure mounted on him by the woman's daughter (Stephanie Okereke) on the long run, when all hope was almost gone.

Sam Dede decided to interrogate the most neglected person connected to the woman (that is the maid) and that led to the unraveling of the mystery. The climax was that it was the maid that actually murdered the madam claiming that she killed her husband with her car on the first night of their wedding and that became the last night. Then she swore that she must revenge her husband's death.

The appearance of Sam Dede a police inspector in "*Mission to Nowhere*" who was clad in mufti at the beginning of the film, except for suspense, has no bearing on the plot. His identity became known in the unfolding plot.

On the setting of the film, beautiful building and flashy cars including well-dressed detectives are quintessential of urban settings, so also are the court rooms and the police stations. Production elements and directing have lots of loopholes. Directing in the film concentrates on camera shots, camera angles and its transition. They are not appropriately chosen. For instance, transition from Lagos and Abuja scenes vice versa is affected with dissolve shots instead of "fade in" and "fade out" shots.

Generally, the good blending of visual and audio signals aid to achieve aesthetic and synergy hence, the audience is drawn into, and is involved in the action of the films. Though some actors involved in the film distinguished themselves with good performance, few could not interpret their roles well hence they made poor performance coupled with the fact that the directing and other design elements need professional touch.

The film portrayed the police as duty minded and professional in handling statutory duties especially criminal investigations despite pressure from the society and the political class. It agrees with the finding from survey that the negative portrayal of the police in the home movies does not affect their effective performance of their duties.

CONCLUSION

The study established that Awka residents watch police-centred Nollywood home videos. Secondly, Awka residents perceive the image of Nigeria Police Force as corrupt rather than being effective and efficient. Also the perceptions they hold of the police do not necessarily emanate from their exposure to police-centred films only but arise from other variables like personal experiences, family and friends and peer group influence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the major findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Movie producer should research their audiences in order to utilize aesthetic elements that synchronize with the pre-existing beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and inclinations of their audiences in order to become more effective in using film to influence audience perceptions.
2. Personal experiences of the largest movie audience should be the principal source of inspiration and idea to the producer and screen writer of a movie. This as well should be gathered through effective audience research.
3. The Nigeria Police Force should intensify its public relations programmes to improve on its image among the Nigerian publics. They can extend this to the movie industry by sponsoring police-centred films that can re-brand and re-shape their image.

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