

Research paper

Experience of Diasporic Nigerians watching Nollywood Films ADEKUNLE DETOKUNBO-BELLO

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Abstract

*Cultural memory occupies an integral part of the **diasporic** community's collective media activity in the 21st Century. It is observed that members of these groups demonstrate compassion and pride each time they individually or commonly experienced viewing their traditional films on television, video or at the cinema. Academic attention has shifted rapidly towards **Audience/Reception** studies on this area of narratives and cultural forms as a result of this phenomenological development. A prominent example of this is Marie Gillespie (2000) study on how television and video are being used to re-create cultural traditions within the South Asian Diaspora in Southall, London. However, the popularity of '**Nollywood**' video **films** – Nigerian Film Industry – amongst diasporic Nigerian- Londoners encouraged the researcher of this paper to develop a fresh investigation on: Why this new cultural narrative genre becomes so famous in London? What sense does the Nigerian community in London make of these movies? How do they experience the **video** films? Focus group and interviewing methods serve as instruments for collecting data which involved five different groups of twenty two participants. The empirical research lasted for thirty days. The study purposely focused on Yoruba- Nigerians who are based in South East London being the primary target audience of the researcher. Some of the major outcome of the study as suggested by the participants indicate that the experience of watching these films remind them of '**home**' and also give them sense of **belonging**. For instance, someone said, "when I watch them, they make me feel at home", and another one said "the hairstyles of the actresses, dressing styles and the traditional costumes are great", and one particularly said "I enjoy the incantations and verbal expressions". The outcome of the study reflects the existence of cultural influence in the lives of migrants community wherever they find themselves away from their original **homeland**, if only a way of relieving **nostalgic** feelings.*

Keywords: *Nollywood, home videos, audience-reception, film, Diaspora, homeland, nostalgia, Yoruba, belonging, cultural- memory*

INTRODUCTION

“I drive through wide boulevards laid out in a grid while listening to classical Western music on my radio. But somewhere, deep in my heart, lurks nostalgia for loud film music, pedestrian vendors, and noise, foot and dust of Mumbai (formerly Bombay) rather than these clean, quiet and well-marked Toronto roads” (Agnew 2006:45).

The quote above is the narrative experience of a lady-immigrant from India during a spring season in Toronto, Canada. It evident passionate attachment to culture and identity a dispersed person could possibly have in a new abode. It is a typical experience of a diasporic Nigerian in London after viewing Nollywood video movie. Indeed, ‘Nollywood Film’, the appellation for the Nigerian Film Industry, producers of the Nigeria popular video movies has recently taken the cinema world by storm. The artefacts of this emergent new third cinema genre has been travelling in leaps and bounds across the black African states, and of late spreading over the Atlantic to take the stage in the western hemisphere. It is reckoned in London this popular film is quite famous amongst the diasporic community, i.e. the Caribbean, black Africans, particularly Nigerians. Guardian-UK article orchestrates its popularity within Africa and United Kingdom. It echoes “there are few places in South East London, the heart of the Nigerian community in Britain where there isn’t a Nollywood stall”. Africine – a French journal article also proclaims the popularity of the Nigerian videos. It says the London market in Southwark and Lewisham boroughs had welcomed Nigeria video films right from the 1990s. In this light, this research examines the experiences of the Nigerian-Londoners watching Nollywood video films. It will focus on Nigerian-Yoruba ethnic community members who reside in London South East. This is because Yoruba people concentrates more in this area than elsewhere within the London metropolis. South East is where market display and a continual discourse around the subject ‘Nollywood’ remains very prominent which in essence make Yoruba community suitable as a target audience for this research. Yoruba ethnic group is one of the three major tribes in Nigeria; the two others are Hausa and Igbo.

So, why are the video films so popular? What sense do Nigerian-Londoners make of these movies? How do they get to know about the film genre? What are the means of experiencing them? Is it that they buy them, borrow, go to cinemas, visit friends, encountering with neighbours or family members? There are indications that some literally use the videos to catch fun at free moments, while some others see them as remedy to Nostalgia feelings.

Rationale:

Speculations on Nollywood popularity coupled with consistent rise in Nigerian diasporic population in London provoked the purpose for this investigation. The researcher believes fresh enquiry in this area of interest (which this study embarked upon) can contribute to new line of thinking in regards to reshaping national culture identity. It could also promote new media forms and distributions. Similar example of this research is Marie Gillespie's study on 'South Asian' Southall youth television experience on how comparative response to audiences might open windows of opportunity for a diverse ethnic television culture and audiences particularly from the developing world, which had been very obvious in the western media research. It will remove ethnocentrism in audience perception (Gillespie 2005; Morley 1999 in Ruddock 2001). Anthony Giddens 1990:64 in Gillespie 1995:15) posits in another sense that "local transformation is as much a part of globalisation as the lateral extension of social connections across time and space", which in other words means an avenue to bridge the media gap between developed and developing world. The paper concludes with an attempt to bring home the current and likely future thinking on nostalgic experience of Nigerian- Londoners' encounter with Nollywood video films.

Research Contextual Framework

This paper peruses through fundamental perspectives of Yoruba language and culture. It strives to discover how Yoruba Diaspora has taken to the issue of tradition within the context of watching Nollywood films. How culture has formed and built template for aesthetics. It covers the context of how Yoruba culture and tradition became the bedrock of Nigerian cinema. Associated premises like nostalgia, Diaspora, cultural memory and audience-reception theory were also put under spotlights as contexts for reflection with the empirical findings. The author of this paper originally hails from Yoruba-Nigerian ethnic tribe, which gives him anthropological potency on the background knowledge of Yoruba tradition and culture.

Literature Review

Anatomy of Yoruba background:

The Yoruba – briefly:

Historically, it is known that on the western part of Nigeria is situated a kingdom named Yoruba Empire lying in the west coast of Africa (Mullen 2004; Soyinka 2006). A number of the indigenous group members also spread across some parts of neighbouring countries which includes Republic of Benin and Togo. Yorubas could be found in Brazil, Cuba, the Caribbean, and America. European nations have witness influx of these migrants at one time or the other. Great Britain has a larger experience of this development simply being that Nigeria was Britain's colonial territory. Yoruba possesses one of the biggest cultural group today with an estimated forty million of them worldwide (Mullen 2004). The trend of Diasporas formation came via various avenues, like slavery; recorded a large amount of Nigerian-Yorubas whisked away to America, and as they leave, they took along their cultural tradition which include religious, dance, folklores and tales by the moonlight, et al. Yoruba traditional music focuses on Yoruba deities (Mullen 2004).

Some of Yoruba culture and tradition:

Yoruba language is one of the three major Nigerian languages Nollywood films producers' uses in communicating their audiences. The others are English and Igbo. Yoruba culture and tradition are very deep and vast but only few relative ones will be mentioned in this paper. Yorubas are quite passionate about their culture and tradition and this always reflect in their daily life styles. The religious believe for example Christianity brought into Nigerian society by the British missionaries has developed deeply into a strong culture and tradition, other religions like Islam and traditional beliefs are also part of the traditional culture. For instance, Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* (2006) explains that, one of the Yoruba tradition stipulates when a King dies, the horseman (the man that minds the king horse any time he rides) must be sacrificed and

buried before the king's burial and this become an aesthetic. Oral tradition is another powerful tradition that remains strong within Yoruba tribe. Most of the cultural practice within the Yoruba society world over from the beginning and now are through verbal communication which in Yoruba means oral dialectical language '**ORO ENU**'. Oral tradition is very dignifying and well respected within Yoruba society (Oyewo in Falola and Genova 2005). It helps to carry messages and interpret them; it can as well serve as agent of modification. Obododinma stresses the power in orality as she wrote on Yoruba Christian video films that producers use the power of 'oro' (word of mouth) to develop aesthetics (Haynes and Okome 2000). Ugochukwu (2008) analyses orality in Yoruba culture in her bibliographical survey that represents its influence in Nollywood video films. It goes thus:

Within the historical perspective, some articles show how the video film medium naturally emerged from Yoruba popular culture others coming from the literary sense, see these films, with their many indoor scenes as yet another facet of the rich Yoruba theatre. A few articles present video film as inspired by traditional orality. Others consider them in relation to Nigerian TV shows

(<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/feguson-centre/nollywood-uk/document/parentugo-nollywood-paper.pdf>)

The afore-mentioned are some of the many Yoruba norms that formed basic aesthetics for the background of Nigerian cinema.

Yoruba Travelling Theatre Group: How quintessential?

Quite a number of academic writers have embraced the perception that theatre activity in Nigeria emerges from the backdrop of Yoruba Travelling Theatre Group formed since 1930s, and reign through 1950s and 70s in western part of Nigeria. They adapted road tripping strategy; routing one town to the other, school to school, to stage-showcased their popular drama. They have easily derived their major aesthetic from various Yoruba ethos. Ukadike (2000) stresses the crowd was so enthusiastic about these local productions. Yoruba Travelling Theatre Group was categorised by some; as the origin of the world theatre (Oyewo, in Falola and Genova 2005; Haynes and Okome 2000). Joel Adedeji; cultural studies researcher reiterates that the efficacy of the Yoruba traditional artists were derived from enduring and rudimental norms of religious practice of

Yoruba people, such as the cultural ancestral worship that eventually faded out to become a simple amusement after the fall of the practice. Some other values that contributed to the success of the Yoruba Theatre Group are their natural ways of entertainments like traditional drumming, singing and dancing which are deeply rooted in Yoruba culture. Again, oral culture of The Yorubas which consists of fable, storytelling, chanting of Odu Ifa (creator) and ballads are all part of the unique prowess that equipped the group with original incentives towards drama. Biodun Jeyifo emphasises “Yoruba Travelling Theatre fits well into barber’s definition of Popular Arts” (Falola and Genova 2005:99). Narratives are not without history. Survey by Scholes and Kellogg (1966) reveals how the narrative in the west emanated from its old oral origins into what is available today without ignoring social, psychological, aesthetic and more other features. Although, Walter Ong in a different tone proclaims:

“Acknowledging the complexities of the full history of narrative,
the present account will simply call attention to some
salient differences that set off narrative...attention to the
functioning of memory” (Ong 1982:141).

However, Ong (1982) stresses further that the effectiveness of oral mnemonic composition is usually highly demonstrated in narrative plot, which does not particularly happens in oral culture plots. This, one believes usually reflect in some of the Nollywood film plots, particularly Yoruba genre, that one can always recognise within the cinematic storylines.

Meanwhile, Ann Swindlers statement “culture consists of such symbolic vehicles of meaning including beliefs, ritual practice such as languages, gossips stories and rituals of everyday life” (Falola and Genova2005:100), resonates Yoruba tradition that forms the stem for Yoruba Theatre Group. Along the line, this group of artists successfully took advantage of their fame and popularity to transfer their schematic onto cinema, in both 35mm and 16mm format, with the able assistance of Ola Balogun, a legendary academic filmmaker and few others, this continued till middle 1980s when celluloid production became unaffordable due to economic crisis in the country at that time. Incidentally, the disappearance of celluloid film became the advent of home video, a course championed by Yoruba Travelling Theatre group (Ayorinde and Okafor 1996), followed by the likes of Kenneth Nnebue; a film producer of Igbo sector who remains a prominent figure in the history of what is known as Nollywood films today.

Nigeria diasporic community in London:

Nigerian Diaspora are spread across the globe, from West African neighbouring states, Brazil, Cuba, Haiti, United States, to Great Britain. Prior to 1960s, Nigerians have been living in Britain, especially in London. In the post 1960s, the influx of Nigerians into United Kingdom increased enormously due to academic interests, as there were more demands for more qualified and highly skilled personnel immediately after the Country's independence (http://www.qca.org.uk/library/assets/media/qca-05-1763-11341_nigeriapdf). Also, the eruption of civil war that begun towards the end of 1960s, which provoked unrest; resulted in high magnitude of emigration of citizens to other parts of the world which including Britain. The Igbo and Yoruba ethnic people represent the majority Nigerian community in London, with their Languages well functioning within the society. They are spread across the length and breadth of London with high concentration in Peckham, Elephant and Castle, Dalston, Hackney, Swiss Cottage, Kilburn, Woolwich and Thamesmead. It is reported British born Nigerians are ever challenged on their identity between being a British or Nigerian, particularly, in the area of culture and tradition. Although, there have been varieties of culture and social network helping them cope, especially in this diffused multicultural society. Yoruba ethnic group remains one of the largest African community members in London. Nollywood films have become popular amongst the black African communities in London since the 1990s. Guardian-UK Newspaper reports:

“There are few places in south-east London, the heart of the Nigerian community in Britain, where there isn't Nollywood DVD stall.

The cable channel 'BEN' shows several of these every night”

(<http://film.guardian.co.uk/features/featurepages/0,,2141813,00.html>). This also attests to Nollywood films popularity amongst Yoruba community in South East London.

On the other hand Paul Gilroy (1993) in Matori J.L, article – ‘Diasporic roots of Yoruba nations’ disagrees with the opinion connecting Diaspora's cultural connection to Africa as essentialism; he rather sees it as discontinuous cultural exchange among diverse Africa-Diaspora population (Matori 1999). This seems significance considering the views earlier on; on varieties of culture and social network helping the British born children cope in the diffused multicultural society like London.

Past study reveals '*Nostalgia*' reflects a feeling, a yearning for a lost time and space which usually locate in the past. Svetlana Boym (2001) posits "Nostalgia stifled with conventional confinement of time and space. It is a form of mechanism that surfaces at a period of remembering the past within the present time. Chase and Shaw argues "of all the ways of using history, nostalgia is the most general, looks the most innocent, and probably the most dangerous (1989:1). In another perspective, Lowenthal in Chase and Shaw (1989) retracted the background of Nostalgia through the medical history; meaning a natural experience derived from missing one's original home. Effect of Nostalgia is not limited within a specific scope. It has to do with individual, people as a community, nation as a whole, age and time, historical activities, love life, war time, long journey and so on. Nostalgia is also describes as an agent of repression which we have little or no control over. Boym in addition stresses, it is a fact that as a people of the same ethnic community, longing is what usually blend us together, but we always at any given chance wish to discuss belonging and non-belonging (2001). Another fascinating premise on nostalgia is the connotations around remembering. There is an understanding that what stick to our memory for so long are issues overwhelmed by our emotions. Boym (2001) made us to understand that the personal and historical activities we shared have already blends us together. Collective memory becomes more interesting when cultural fantasy discourse takes place within the groups of diasporic community. Vygotsky in Boym (2001) indicates, what moulded our minds as human is not natural memory other than a human memory or cultural influence facilitating the materiality devoid of motivation peripheral. Heritage is synonymous with nostalgia in a sense; they both have something to do with the past. Chase and Shaw ((1989) describe a village as a comforting neighbourhood for its inhabitants with abundant folk –memory.

Gilroy reminiscence '*Diaspora*' is primordial, while Ali and Suarez divulge: Diaspora understanding today bewilders the previous obvious perception, physical boundaries, citizenship and similarity (Brazier and Mannur 2003). Diaspora was the appellation attached with the Jews in the early period of dispersion from their initial homeland into various cities across the globe. The term Diaspora became an expansive dosage borrowed by academia in addressing the subject transnationally. History exposes the extensive exodus of black African communities date back to the early period of 16th century, the slave trade era that forced a huge sum of West African natives out of their habitations into new unfamiliar destinations. In retrospect, the transatlantic African diasporic movement at this time became pockets of Diasporas spreading incessantly across the globe (Brazier and Mannur 2003). The kinds of these could be found in many African and Asian

indigenes massively migrating into UK since the fall of 20th century. Vijay Agnew (2006) emphasises that home as a meaning generally means where we live, where we come from and probably a house (made of block or mud). We can actually see them physically, yet, they could constantly be imagined through dreams and visions, as our domains, fortresses, comfort zones; so paramount to our spirit, soul and body. Agnew (2006) however, echoes that creating the idea of one's home lies amidst the framework 'self and with community identities that are deterritorialized or constructed across boundaries of phenomena such as race, ethnicity, nationally and citizenship'. This submission simply means one's home is in one's imagination. It is also pertinent to view another profound knowledge which expresses that sense of remembering varies from one to another. Stuart Hall's critical analogy on cultural identity and representation envisioned the theories of 'enunciation' (Hall in Braziel and Mannur 2003:234). It says:

there are moments when we represent ourselves with the manner
we verbally express ourselves plus where we have been coming from
nonetheless, who articulates together with the purpose of the expression;
are certainly not the same, and under no circumstance would they be
In similar situation (Hall in Braziel and Mannur 2003)

Stuart opinion above emphasises on how challenging issues like identity could be in representation. He believes we should not see identity as an easily solved ideology but rather a continuous process in construction left opened within the frame of representation. Hua in Agnew (2006) states 'a study of Diaspora can help explain the dispersal of previous oppressed or colonized subject in diverse locations and... identities and sense of belonging (Agnew 2006:187).

Memory is experienced collectively and personally. Usually, people that identified with each other as part of a collective past would however, together, often develop *collective memories*. Maurice Halbwachs describes memory as a collective, social phenomenon rather than individual (Bal, M. et al 1999:75). And, his ideology predominantly created a pathway for platform memory that seated as a construction rather than natural which forms academic stance for memory as a social construct separated from naturalism. Halbwachs dogma on collective memory explains personal memory functions as social memory and not an individual experience. He stresses that as much as memory is capable of being created, stored, or communicated by individual, it could as well be used as social constituted forms, narratives and relations (Bal et al 1999). Like Agnew opines:

"Memories of the marginalised and subjugated illuminate the past
in ways that contest hegemonic memories and raise the question

of who remembers, why they remember, and what they remember”
(Agnew 2006:20).

Agnew opinion reflects the rudimental process of cultural memory. It has been observed that the diasporic community people often develop unifies forum within their culture towards enhancing and encouraging each other against what they observe as marginalisation. For instance, South Asians in the Diaspora are so passionate about their popular tradition of Bollywood films. The film genre always stimulates their thoughts and reminds them how sophisticated life styles are being determined by material power. Cinematic projections of these scenarios are precisely in forms - like costumes, big cities, and domestic relationships- that reflect ways of life of the buoyant western nations (Agnew 2006).

Viewing from the media studies perspective, audience simply means the convergence of the individual people as a result of their common interest in hearing and watching various programmes on radio, television, and as well consumed their interest in music, advertising and internet. The popular assumption is that audiences are formed by virtue of interest and natural innate circumstance, but not. Rather, they were created by media organisation themselves as a result of their creative dynamism and desperation (Toynbee in Gillespie 2005). This development has created an imperative audience research activity in social science and humanities springing up globally in recent time. Morley’s nationwide audience is an example of this process. A major instance in these efforts is Marie Gillespie’s investigation on how comparative response to audiences has influenced media dynamism. This might invariably opens windows of opportunity for a diverse ethnic television culture and audiences, especially from developing nations. She is of the opinion that such course would remove ethnocentrism in audience perception (Gillespie 2005; Morley 1993; Ruddock 2001). As Gillespie explains thus:

The experience of being uprooted, displaced and discriminated against tends to produce feelings of insecurity, nostalgia for an idealised past and longing for an idealised ‘homeland’. This often encourages attempts to maintain, strengthen and even re-invent cultural traditions which are seen to be under threat or attack. But the migration and settlement also inevitably lead to an acceleration of the process of cultural change-process in which the media are implicated (Gillespie 1995).

The above re-affirms purpose of ethnological audience-reception studies embarked upon by Gillespie on South Asian Southall-youths’ pattern of media consumption within the broader

context of their local life. She focused on the role of television in the creation and transformation of identity among these young Punjabi Londoners. Her extensive study on this issue re-echoes the phrase ‘the experience of migrant or diasporic people is central to contemporary societies’ (Appadurai 1990; Hall 1987; Hannerz 1990 in Gillespie 1995). Invariably, all this accentuates the importance of media in promoting ethnic minority interest for propagation of national multicultural society.

Methods

Study design:

The paper adopts empirical qualitative research methodology; in forms of ethnological investigation. ‘Ethnography is a way of understanding social life in relational and holistic terms’ (Gillespie 1995:54). Qualitative research becomes a choice based on the fact that the research questions require deep insight and understanding of the participatory subjects of the research (Robson and Foster 1989). Focus groups and semi-structured interviewing methods were the instruments used for data sampling and collection. Focus group is effective when discussion by a small group of people can create innate feeling result (Wisker 2001; Stewart and Shamdasani 1990; Wengraf 2001; Morgan 1998), in which this research attempts to achieve. The focus group sessions in this research were originally classified into three different categories; which includes: first generation immigrants, international students, descendants of the immigrants, and collective perspectives. There were brief Nollywood films-video screening sessions followed by open interviews for the participants. Face-to-face/telephone interviewing method was used as a back up for the selected participants (first generation immigrants group) who could not participate in the focus group meetings for some reasons. Wisker said “asking open questions such as what do you think...? You could elicit an almost endless number of responses, which would give variety of ideas and feelings people have” (Wisker, 2001:120). Wisker’s notion underpins the purpose of this study as it poise to reach the in-depth minds of the diasporic Nigerians in South East London as they experience Nollywood movies.

Participants:

The empirical questions were formed from the backdrop of these research three major questions, which are: 1. Why are Nollywood video films so popular? 2. What sense do Nigerian-Londoners

make of the movies? 3. How do they come about Nollywood film? These questions came out of various speculations surrounding the popularity of Nollywood videos especially amongst the diasporic Yoruba- Nigerians in London South East. The carefully selected eleven semi-structured open-ended questions were in two parts, three of them are general, and eight are specifics of which two are attached to each of the four designated groups: 1. First generation immigrants 2. Descendants of the immigrants 3. Nigerian International students 4. Collective perspective (e.g. self exile). A total of 22 individuals participated in the survey, 17 are under focus groups while 5 under interviewing sessions. The data below illustrates the group structure:

Focus group:

Descendant of the first immigrants – 7
International students - 6
Collective perspective - 4
(Expatriate, self exiled etc)

Interviewing:

First generation immigrants -5

The geographical locations of the participants were strictly limited to within South East London, and the criterion for participation was to be a Nigerian, particularly from Yoruba ethnic background, work or reside within this neighbourhood. A convenient and suitable venue, but different days were used for all the three focus group session, while interviewing for the first immigrants participants was a home visit or telephone at their convenient times. At each meeting, all the participants were completely aware of how data would be used and their consent forms were taken. The study lasted for thirty days.

The following are the eleven empirical questions asked the participants during the focus group meetings and the Interviewing:

General:

1. What do you know about Nollywood?
2. How do you watch Nigeria video films, if you watch them?
3. What are your experiences whenever you watch them?

Specific (Focus groups):

1. **Descendants of the immigrants:** Does it make any difference to you when you watch Nollywood and then Western film? Do you watch Yoruba films and how do you relate with what you see and hear; even when you might not understand the language?
2. **International students:** What difference does it make to you when you watch Nollywood films in Nigeria and here in London? Were you attracted to Yoruba films in Nigeria or it was when you came here?
3. **Collective perspectives** (representing others who didn't belong to any of the above group e.g. self and forced exile, expatriates): Do you have time to watch Nigerian films? What's your choice amongst all Nollywood sectional productions (English, Yoruba, or Ibo)?

Specific (Interviewing-first generation immigrants):

Having being in London for a while, does any Nigerian film make any difference to you? Do you feel Yoruba film stories communicate any message to you any longer?

Some empirical Findings:

The outcome of both focus groups meeting and the face-to-face/telephone interviewing sessions is not analysed individually, but rather collectively; as the responses (verbal and body language) to the questions by the participants are quite similar and can easily be sectioned into groups. Here are responses to some of the questions asked:

What do you know about Nollywood video films? This question was framed to determine how passionate Nigerians are of Nollywood films.

Response: Reactions to this question were universal in both focus groups meetings and individual interviewing sessions. The common phrase expressed by the participants to this question was: '*they are the Nigerian films, the next to Bollywood after Hollywood*'. It was noted that the majority of the entire groups' members are so passionate and eager to identify with Nollywood phenomenon. There were couple of them whose body languages displayed indifferences; however, they got inundated by the enthusiasms demonstrated by the majority.

Do you watch Yoruba films and how do you relate with what you see and hear, even when you might not understand the language? This question attempted to determine the influence of Yoruba culture and tradition in the life of descendants of the first immigrants'.

Response: The participants' reactions to this question weren't quite straight forward. They all seems very indifferent about Yoruba films, most prefer English version, although, they all applauded Yoruba traditional films. They said: *'The costumes are great, the traditional beads are wonderful, and I love them'*, also *"the village settings are fantastic, and they remind me of my parents' pasts"*. It was noted that they weren't too bothered about the language, some said they could hear but couldn't speak. Someone said: *'I like the verbal expressions like slangs and incantation; they make me feel something different from western films'*

What are your experiences whenever you watch them? The questions aimed to explore the natural feelings of the participants and discover if Nollywood fill any gap in their existence.

Response: The entire participants in all groups demonstrate personal passion on this question. There were series of eye contact between participants at the focus group sessions that suggested their special interest in the question. These are the comments: *'When I watch them, they make me feel at home, they make me feel closer to home'*, *'I watch them to relax, especially, the Yoruba ones, very funny and quite thoughtful as well'*. *'The hairstyle of the actresses, their dressing styles and traditional costumes are great'*. Numerous comments though, one particular participant amongst the descendants of the immigrants group said: *'mum does cry sometimes when she watches these films, and I wonder why'*

How do you watch Nigerian video films, if you watch them? It is important to identify the variable ways of watching Nollywood films.

Response: There were numerous reactions to this among the participants. A third said: *'I buy and rent them'*, a few said: *'I watch them at my parents, siblings, and friends'*. Very few said, *'I had seen them at the cinema couple of times'*. A participant amongst the international student said *"I don't really care in watching those movies, but I'm drawn to them each time I hear the soundtrack that usually contain traditional undertones"*, *"I love watching them with my Ghanaian girlfriend, she encouraged me to watch them, and I now love them so much"*. Most of participants said: *'I watch them on BEN TV and NOLLYWOOD MOVIES TV (African satellite channels) all the time'*.

Do you feel Yoruba film stories communicate any message to you since you have migrated to London? This question was directed at the first generation immigrants' interviewees. The purpose was to unfold the strength of Yoruba films and the cultural motifs they embedded.

Response: The participants were eager to say something passionate about their childhood experience. Most of them reckoned Yoruba film has dynamic aesthetics that outlive generations. One said *'The stories communicate with you wherever you are in this world'*. Another one said: *'I watch any Nollywood films to update my memory about Nigeria'*. Someone said: *it gives me feelings of naturality, especially traditional stories. There is power in Yoruba oral culture. Yoruba films dig into the root of tradition to form stories. There is power behind oral language of Yoruba'*

Were you attracted to Yoruba films in Nigeria or when you came to London? This question was addressed to the International students group for studying the efficacies of Yoruba tradition/Nollywood in their lives away from Nigeria.

Response: About three quarter of the participants in this group said they have been attracted to Nollywood-Yoruba films before they left Nigeria, and they still are. One said *“Though I hardly watch them since I came to this country due to lack of time, but still love them”*. Another one said *“I always watch them to catch fun and relax”* some said *“I use them to catch up with home update”*

Discussion:

Contemporary literature in media studies stresses how media forms are being used to create cultural tradition within local communities, and how they have also influenced cultural exchange debate. Findings of this qualitative study offer insights into the minds of diasporic Yoruba community in London South East, particularly, from their experiences of watching Nollywood films. It helps to expose the fundamental perspective of Yoruba-Nigerian culture and how paramount its culture and tradition are to this local community within London diverse national culture. Findings also identify that ‘Nollywood’ to a Nigerian-Londoner is recognised to be the world third largest film industry, after Hollywood and Bollywood. The passion and concern of Nigerian-Londoners on their cultural identity is synonymous to Svetlana Boym (2001) notion which says heritage is such an invaluable treasure to human endeavour; it usually and naturally comes under our passionate protection rather than neglecting it for sake of humility. It is hoped these findings would be helpful to other researchers working in the area of cultural exchange.

Major findings through the focus group meeting and interviewing (face-to-face/telephone) have identified costumes and traditional beads to be great treasure to descendants of first immigrants of Yoruba-Nigerians in London. Likewise, village life and local building structures as demonstrated in Nollywood films are important to future generation of Nigerians who live in London. Nigerian-British born recognise the importance of tradition through their parents’ experience as they watch Nollywood films together. This corroborates Boym’s connotation on remembering. There is an understanding that what stick to our memory for so long are issues overwhelmed by our emotions. (Boym 2001; Bal et al 1997), this made us to understand that the personal and historical activities we shared have already blended us together. Collective memory becomes more interesting when cultural fantasy discourses take place within the groups of diasporic community.

Further findings reveal that Oral culture remains very strong within Yoruba-Nigerian community. Nollywood films in Yoruba use dialogue and sound to communicate to their audiences. It is used in forming aesthetics for storylines development. It is identified that Yoruba film stories (especially traditional) communicate messages to members of Yoruba community in London. They believe there is power in Yoruba oral culture, and that Yoruba films dig into the root of tradition. Reflecting on previous literature, there is indication that ‘**ORO ENU**’ (Oral tradition) is very dignifying and well respected within Yoruba society’ (Oyewo in Falola and Genova 2005). It accentuates the values of Yoruba Traditional Theatre Group. Their natural ways of entertainments like traditional drumming which are deeply rooted in Yoruba culture. This also boosts the feelings of one of the participant who said the soundtrack in Yoruba films is what attracts him really and not the visuals. Mullen said: Music and dance are embellished in Yoruba culture which added grace and carriage to its activity (Mullen 2004:26). Finding also establish that verbal expressions like slang and incantation attracted Yoruba-Londoners to Nollywood films, for it gives them something different from Western films. Oral culture of the Yorubas which consists of fables storytelling, chanting of Odu- Ifa (Creator) and ballads are all part of Nollywood threshold for Oral aesthetics that developed narratives for Yoruba film production that won the hearts of diasporic community. According to survey by Scholes and Kellogg (1966), narrative in the West emanated from its old Oral origins into what is available today, which testifies to historical importance of oral tradition. Walter Ong (1982) establishes the efficacy of oral mnemonic composition in narrative plot, which is obvious in Nollywood storylines.

Another important finding in this empirical journey is the identification of variable ways of experiencing Nollywood video movies. It was discovered that a lot of people buy and rent this video movies from time-to-time and watch them with their family members on visits, visit local cinemas where screening take place. Many of them experience them through available African satellite TV Channels. This emphasises the cultural identity amongst the Nigerian-Londoners. It relates to Marie Gillespie’s work on the role of television in creating and transforming identity amongst the South East Southall Punjabi brothers. Her investigation on how comparative response to audiences has influenced media dynamism. This echoes the experience of migrant community or diasporic people in central to contemporary societies (Appadurai 1990; Hall 1987; Hannerz 1990 in Gillespie 1995). Vijay Agnew (2006) opinions on how diasporic community people developed unifies forum within their culture to encourage each other against some sorts of marginalisation, confirms Gillespie’s earlier study on issue of cultural experience of Yoruba-Nigerians in London on Nollywood films. Agnew discussion on Asian in Diaspora’s popular

tradition of Bollywood films cinematic projection of scenario like costumes, big cities and domestic relationships has influenced away of life within diasporic community people in the west (Agnew 2006).

Although, not clearly assembled within the findings of this study that the idea of cultural identity and representation could sometimes remains in one's imagination, as sense of remembering could vary from one person to the other. However, Stuart Hall critical analogy on cultural identity and representation which envisioned the theory of 'enunciation' cannot be ignored. It says:

There are moments when we represent ourselves with the manner
we verbally express ourselves plus where we have been coming from
nonetheless who articulate together with the purpose of the expression;
are certainly not the same, and under no circumstance would they be
in similar situation (Hall in Braziel and Mannur 2003).

This notion represents a pointer to limitation to collective memory which indicates that there are times individual might be different from one another, and will always find a platform of representation.

Conclusion:

There are indications from this study that Oral culture which emerged as a strong base for Yoruba tradition; forms a strong template for 'Nollywood' aesthetic. Culture and sense of belonging have been observed to have endeared diasporic Nigerians in South East London to Nollywood films. Also, Heritage has been identified to be a remedy to Nostalgia feeling for diasporic community members. However, one cannot ignore Stuart Hall's notion of enunciation which says there is limitation to collective memory, which means individual should be allowed to speak for self. Meanwhile, the key message to surface from this study is the influence of Yoruba culture which remains a form of cultural memory that transcend through a media form- 'Nollywood' which will continue to be engaged within the media discourse and amongst the diasporic community members, particularly, the ever increasing Nigerian community in London. Though, this data are unlikely to represent a complete research in this area of study, it is believed that it will open a new line of thinking and contribute to media studies in the area of minority ethnic culture, hoping that national culture and media consumption can be positively affected as time goes on. Further research is needed to uncovered premises that can substantiate this piece of work.

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