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HAUSA FILM INDUSTRY: SUCSESSES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT:

With its emergence for over four decades, Hausa Film Industry, popularly known as Kannywood has been proliferating with appreciation from the Nigerian Film Industry, Nollywood and many fans for boosting movies. On the other hand, it is again facing challenges from critics, pressure groups and Censorship Board. The challenges include in the aspects of scripting, storylines, characterization and the general production processes. These informed the ardent need for revisiting activities of the Kannywood Industry, especially in a bid for the films it is producing to satisfy the demands of any standard movie. Such demands are for mirroring the complex struggle of life, the struggle which ever has its roots in the depth nature of the target audience. Likewise, cultural trends and the social environment.

Keywords: Hausa, Film Industry, Challenge, Film, Characterization, Processes, Appreciation, Censorship.

صناعة فيلم بلغة الهوسا: النجاحات والتحديات

إبراهيم شهو

قسم اللغات واللغويات النيجيرية. كلية الآداب، جامعة ولاية كادونا، كادونا، نيجيريا.

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ملخص:

انطلقت صناعة الأفلام الناطقة بالهوسا، المشتهرة باسم "كانيوود"، منذ أربعة عقود؛ ودأبت على الانتشار منذ ذلك الحين باستحسان من صناعة الأفلام النيجيرية المعروفة باسم "نوليوود"، وواكب ذلك استقطاب الكثير من المشجعين تدعيماً لتلك الأفلام. في المقابل، عاودت التحدياتُ الظهورَ أمام تلك الصناعة من مصادر شتى منها النقاد وجماعات الضغط وهيئة الرقابة. ومن التحديات الماثلة ما يتصل بجوانب السيناريو والحوار، ومنها ما يطال خطوط السرد القصصي، والشخصيات وعمليات الإنتاج العامة؛ فَكشَفَ هذا الواقع عن الحاجة الماسّة إلى إعادة النظر في أنشطة صناعة "كانيوود" لأهدافاً من أحصها تمكينُ أفلامها من استيفاء متطلبات أي فيلم جيد. وترمي تلك المتطلبات إلى إبراز الكفاح في الحياة بتعقيده، ذلك بأنه الكفاح المتجذر في حياة الجمهور المخاطب بتلك الأفلام. وعلى المنوال ذاته تستهدف تلك المتطلبات الكشف عن الاتجاهات الثقافية والبيئية الاجتماعية في المجتمعات التي تعبر عنها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: هوسا، صناعة السينما، تحدي، فيلم، توصيف، عمليات، تقدير، رقابة.

1.0 Introduction

As suggested by Ali (2004:100), that despite our inherent diversity, Nigerians need films and drama that will project our images and culture. We also need artistic projects that will present the facts of our life not a distortion. Hausa film industry signifies a Hausa - language cinema, informally known as Kannywood that gets its root from Kano before spreading to other centers like Kaduna and Jos, all in Nigeria. The industry plays a great role in developing the cultural heritage of the Hausa community, especially in terms of socio-economic life of the people as well as entertaining and educating its audience within and outside the community. Of recent, it is currently facing conflicting reactions from its teeming audience both locally and internationally with some appreciating, some rejecting, while others on the fence. Thus, the paper sets to assess the successes of the industry and at the same time make an inquiry as par the challenges facing it.

2.0 Evolution and development of the Hausa film industry

The Hausa film industry is a subsidiary of Nollywood, Nigerian major film industry. According to Gar (2017), it is the largest film industry in Northern Nigeria having over 120 film companies registered with Kano State Film Makers Association between the year 1995 and 2000. The industry consists of home video movies, television drama, film/video musicals, and sound tracks, trailers (radio, television, and cinema commercials)

2.1 Evolution

According to Ali (2004:25), film was introduced into Nigeria during the first film exhibition in August, 1903 and the first Nigerian to manage film as a business enterprise was Herbert Macaulay. The film culture is a backlog of foreign films as since its introduction up to the 20th century, aliens handled film importation, distribution, screening and general control. According to Adamu (2019:12), Indian, Chinese and American films were prominent of all the foreign films viewed by the teeming Hausa audience, mostly in cities and urban areas.

Filmmaking in Nigeria is divided largely along regional, and marginally ethnic and religious lines. Thus, there are distinct film industries – each seeking to portray the concern of the particular section and ethnicity it represents. However, there is the English-language film industry that is a melting pot for filmmaking and filmmakers from most of the regional industries, this industry is the Nollywood. Kannywood on the other hand, is typical regional film industry of northern instinct.

2.2 Development

Hausa film industry under goes several stages of development. It started since from 1950s with the introduction of screen film shows in open places, like the popular films of *Baban Larai* and *Shaihu Umar* which had progressed from the prose narrative medium, as a novel of the same title by Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, through the stage, as an adaptation by Umaru Ladan and Dexter Lindersy, to the screen.

The Hausa film industry was inspired as far back as 1970s from various television drama series aired by the then Radio Television Kaduna (RTK) with major dramatists like Kasimu Yero, Usman Baba Pategi, alias Samanja, to name a few. Another source of inspiration is the Bollywood, where Indian movies were hitherto, being patronized by the Hausa audience.

3.0 The Role of Hausa Film Industry in Sustainable Development

Gar (1997), relates that Film has no limited boundary and for it to achieve its purpose, it has to have substantial viewers. Likely, Kannywood films are not in any way affected by lack of such audience. Hausa films have been tremendously affecting the lives of people. This influence wielded by Kannywood over the lives of the industry's teeming audiences, directly or indirectly in various ways, that include:

- i. Hausa film industry is a potential medium of projecting, protecting and promoting of the indigenous Hausa cultures, norms and values.
- ii. Hausa film industry contributes immensely to the economic development of the country by creating jobs opportunities, especially to the youths.
- iii. It creates a special market for Hausa movies that is being patronized within and outside the country.
- iv. Involvement of musicals in Hausa films has made the industry as a means of entertainment

4.0 Hausa Films and the Audience Response

Response of the target audience is the bedrock for any artistic production, like dramas and films. If the productions are making positive impact to the society, certainly that will lead to appreciation by the consumers, and on the other hand that will encourage the producers evolve improved measures to meet the demand of the former. Like any other human endeavor, the Hausa film industry ought to be measuring its achievements to facilitate adjustments and improvement. Ekwuazi

(1987), has opined that the motion picture (film) industry has grown fast that it hardly had time to measure its own growth... much of the statistical data about it is based on hearsay. This is a great challenge to the industry and agencies responsible for overseeing its activities. Therefore, there is the need for a careful research on feedback to enable the industry to be on the right track, as the consumers have a right on the products of the industry.

4.1 Rejection

There is a wide out-cry by audience in truest rejection of Hausa films, basing their argument on poor quality production due to lack of modern and sophisticated facilities, in addition to lack of skills. Efforts must be in place so as not to compromise products.

Similarly, there is also out-cry that the Hausa filmmakers are deliberately or otherwise being influenced by foreign cultures, like dances, romance and other actions wish contradict the social norms and values of their target audience, leading to immoralities within the community. The foreign impacts on Nigerian films could be attributed colonial influence on the general affairs of the country. However, due to economic control over cinema institutions, but to my perception, it also includes cultural, the period of post – independence to date is witnessing a diversification of the films in the country. Such as:

- a) Foreign documentaries
- b) Indigenous documentaries
- c) Foreign future films
- d) Indigenous future films

As Shehu (2016: 149 &152), opined dramas are mediums of tracing new traditions and cultures being introduced into societies. With the arrival of t expatriates into the Hausa land, the Hausas witnessed transformations in their culture and literature (films inclusive), some of which are positive, while others negative.

Similarly, since films and drama in general present us directly with scenes that are based on people's actions and interactions, characters play a dominant role and therefore, deserve close attention. Poor characterization is another aspect that also informed the rejection of the Hausa films from some quarters. As characters are portrayed through what they say and do, producers should prioritize on good and guided scripting, choice and selection of right characters for right roles. These will certainly give the needed quality and appreciation to the films.

5 .0 Challenges

The Hausa film industry has since inception been facing lot of challenges, which if well addressed, its productions will be fruitful, and similarly it will have a glorious future worthy of competing. Aspects of challenges for the industry include choice of various themes and storylines, improved technology and professionalism and financial empowerment.

As for the choice of themes and storylines, against basing on romantic issues, Ahmed (2000), is of the view that in selecting a theme for a play (film) the dramatists should be guided by the relevance of the play to the community (target audience). Therefore, it is of great importance to portray problems relating to social, economic, political or cultural aspects with a view of suggesting solutions.

Another challenge worthy noticing is though the Hausa film industry has been in place for almost four decades, yet it is of a little difference with amateurship in its production! Good scripting, involvement of high/ modern technology must be receiving due consideration. This will make the productions of the industry more appreciable. Ladan (2017), is of the view that the Hausa film industry is facing resentment from some of its target audience due to poor scripting and unguided characterization that contradict values and ethics. Hence, the need for the filmmakers to on urgency succumb to the challenge. In scripting and production, filmmakers should always bear in mind, primarily the particular audience that they seek to address.

The casts featured in various Hausa films lack the needed professionalism and education, hence resulting to cultural and technical gaps. To be of international standard, individual film industries and the Kannywood in its entirety must look into this with a view of enrolling the casts for furthering their education and professional trainings.

Regarding financial constraints facing the numerous film industries, this is artificial. Instead of the proliferation of thousands of minor film industries, there should be merger among those that cannot stand on their individual feet. This will enable them cater for all the casts, properties needed, films production as well as other demands by the industry. It is even with this proper arrangement; the industries can face Government or financial institutions for assistance or collaborations.

6.0 Censorship

The issue of imposing censorship on Hausa filmmakers has of recent generates controversies. What is censorship? It is the control of films over flouting the conventions and enforcing that scripts and scenes must be adjusted to remove such portions of them which are immoral or offensive. According to Ekwuazi (1987), the cinema (film) speaks not to individuals, but to multitude and does so in circumstances, time, place and surrounding which the most apt are to arise unusual enthusiasm.

Film censorship becomes necessary because a film motivates thought and action and assures a high degree of attention and retention as compared to the printed word. The combination of act and speech, sight and sound in semi darkness of the theatre with elimination of all distracting ideas will have a strong impact on the minds of the viewers and can affect emotions. Therefore, it has as much potential for evil as it has for good and has an equal potential to instill or cultivate violent or bad behavior. It cannot be equated with other modes of communication.

Censorship by prior restraint is, therefore, not only desirable but also necessary. Against this background, the film has immense potential for good and for evil, hence the need for censorship.

As Giwa (2017), opined, the genre of film industry has its roots firmly placed in the society's lifestyle and the aim is to influence that lifestyle for good. It is also a known fact that mandates of Film Censorship Board include vetting and regulating film content, registering film industries and filmmakers as well as the circulation of their products. Thus, as found in other countries, Censorship Boards at all level of governance, like the Kano State Censorship Board that was established in 2000, should have reinforcement and always be guided by law and order to avoid any sentiment or abuse.

7.0 Conclusion

As the goal of every professional industry is to have a quality delivery, the Hausa film industry is thus not an exception; it should endeavor to use the medium to attain the following goals:

- i. Provide professionally accepted skilled Hausa films.
- ii. Involve dramatists of high repute to participate in the production of morally and socially oriented films.
- iii. Enable the industry serve as a vital instrument for social cohesion
- iv. To promote peace and unity in any given society.
- v. Establish a viable self- reliant industry that can stimulate economic growth through investment.
- vi. Positively protect, project and promote Hausa cultural heritage as Price, W.T. (1913), asserts that the drama in general, impliedly, film inclusive, is a reflex of life.

Finally, as the film industry plays a great role not only on entertainment, but also of enlightenment, educating, propaganda and promotion of other social, economic and cultural aspects of our community, there is the need for collaboration among all stakeholders for maintaining successes of the industry. Also in a bid to meet its challenges, filmmakers, government, institutions of learning, financial institutions, the media among many others should design a plan towards repositioning and ensuring quality delivery of the said industry. Thus, with this effort, the film industry will pave way for more job opportunities, sustenance of cultural heritage and promotion of peaceful co-existence among communities.

As opined by Shehu (2016:175), it is imperative to all playwrights, especially the Hausas to ensure their plays and films to be relevant to their target audience, which is their immediate societies. Similarly, as suggested by Ekwuazi (1987: 102), against the present trends where censors in Kano and elsewhere in Nigeria do not involve themselves with a film that is still in the production, they should borrow a leaf from what happens in the United States where the Rating Board's involvement with the film begins right from the script level. With the adoption of these, productions of Kannywood and other local film industries in Nigeria will be well controlled and sanitized.

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