

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON FILM AUDIENCE
ENGAGEMENT**

BY

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BENIN CITY

FACULTY OF ART

AUGUST 2025.

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE
BACHELOR OF ARTS, (B.A) HONS. DEGREE IN THEATRE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF
BENIN.**

AUGUST 2025.

DECLARATION

I, declare that this project work is based on a study undertaken by me in the Department of Theatre Arts, Faculty of Arts University of Benin under the supervision of Mr. Chuks Omessah for the purpose of acquiring Bachelor of Arts B.A (Honours) degree in Theatre Arts. All ideas and views are products of my research where others view have been used and expressed, they were acknowledged

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research study was embarked upon by Ehimen Obehi Joy in the department of Theatre Arts under my supervision.

MR. OMESSAH C.C

Project Supervisor

DATE

PROF. JOSEPHINE ABBE

Head of Department

DATE

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to Almighty God, for his grace and mercy upon my life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I humbly give thanks to Almighty God for his grace and guidance accorded to me in the successful writing and completion of the project work. To God be the glory.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Mr. Omessah C.C, for his guidance, patience, and insightful feedback throughout the course of this research. Your dedication, encouragement, and belief in my work truly made a difference, and I am thankful for the opportunities learn under your supervision.

I also extend my sincere appreciation to all my lecturers in the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Benin, for the knowledge, mentorship, and inspiration they have provided over the years. Each of you has contributed to my academic growth in unique and meaningful ways, and I am truly grateful for your support.

I want to say thank you to my Mom Mrs. lovina Ehimen and my Dad Mr. Kenneth Ehimen and also my siblings, Miss Ejodamen, Miss isimemen, Miss. Enoseremen and lastly Eromosele, who has always loved me unconditionally and supported me throughout this journey. To my personal person's Orji Chiamaka Esther, Igbinoba Charisa Abiyuwa, Julia Andrew and Etinosa Alvin, thank you So much for all your kindness and help towards me.

Finally, my special appreciation goes to my Mom again, I want to specially thank my dearest mother Mrs. Lovina, and you have been with me every step of the way, right from the start of this journey. You've supported me emotionally, physically, financially, and even with my research. Thank you for always praying for me, for understanding me, for listening, really listening even when I couldn't find the right words. Your love and care means the world to me, and everything I've achieved so far is because you believed in me. I love you so much and I'm forever grateful. May God bless you richly, lift you higher than you ever imagined, and surround you with joy and peace. Amen.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of social media on film audience engagement, focusing on how digital platforms have transformed the ways audiences interact with films and filmmakers. The rapid growth of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (X), YouTube, and TikTok has redefined communication patterns in the entertainment industry, shifting audiences from passive film consumers to active participants in digital conversations. The study investigates how social media facilitates engagement through likes, shares, comments, online discussions, fan communities, and user-generated content, which collectively influence audience perception, anticipation, and loyalty toward films. It also explores how film producers and marketers utilize social media strategies such as teaser campaigns, interactive contests, influencer collaborations, and behind-the-scenes content to stimulate audience participation and strengthen emotional connections with their films. The research is grounded in relevant theoretical frameworks, including the Uses and Gratifications Theory, Diffusion of Innovations, Two-Step Flow Theory, Engagement Theory, and the AIDA Model, which explain the psychological and communicative processes underlying audience interaction online. Using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the study assesses audience responses and engagement patterns to determine the effectiveness of social media in promoting films and sustaining audience interest. The findings are expected to reveal that social media significantly enhances audience engagement by providing accessible, participatory, and interactive platforms that bridge the gap between filmmakers and their audiences. Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how social media has revolutionized film communication, marketing, and audience behavior in the digital age.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The growth of digital technology in the 21st century has reshaped how individuals consume media and interact with cultural products. In *The Rise of the Network Society*, Manuel Castells explains that the shift from an industrial to a networked society has transformed the flow of information, making communication more interactive and decentralized (Castells 44). This highlights how social media allows film industries to directly engage with audiences, bypassing the limitations of traditional media such as television and print.

Henry Jenkins in his book *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* emphasizes that audiences are no longer passive consumers but active participants who interact with, remix, and circulate media content (Jenkins 3). This showcases how film audiences today engage with trailers, reviews, hashtags, and behind-the-scenes clips on platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, creating conversations that boost the visibility and relevance of films.

Also, Philip Kotler, in his influential text *Marketing Management*, underscores the importance of customer engagement in brand promotion, noting that interactive platforms drive consumer loyalty and purchasing behavior (Kotler 112). Applied to film, this demonstrates that social media campaigns through interactive posts, contests, and influencer marketing help sustain audience interest before, during, and after a film's release. This also highlights a major departure from earlier decades when film marketing relied heavily on expensive television advertisements, posters, and radio jingles.

The role of social media in shaping audience decisions can be understood through Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld's classic study *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications*. Their two-step flow theory highlights how interpersonal communication strongly influences decision-making (Katz and Lazarsfeld 32). This showcases how, in the digital age, film opinions and reviews spread rapidly across online communities, where influencers and film critics on YouTube or Instagram shape audience perceptions and engagement.

In the African context, Onookome Okome in *Nollywood: Spectatorship, Audiences and the Sites of Consumption* argues that Nollywood's success lies in its adaptability to new forms of audience interaction and distribution (Okome 77). This highlights how Nigerian filmmakers now use Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to reach both local and global audiences, thereby increasing visibility and broadening market reach. Similarly, Jonathan Haynes in *Nollywood: The Creation of Nigerian Film Genres* demonstrates that Nollywood's cultural influence is amplified through digital engagement, where fans do not only watch films but also contribute to the discourse around them online (Haynes 56).

Danah Boyd and Nicole Ellison, in their book *Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship*, point out that the oversaturation of online spaces can reduce visibility for individual content (Boyd and Ellison 220). This showcases the difficulties filmmakers face in trying to stand out in the crowded digital marketplace. Moreover, not all online engagement leads to actual film patronage, raising questions about the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies.

Therefore, understanding the impact of social media on film audience engagement is crucial. The insights from Castells, Jenkins, Kotler, Katz and Lazarsfeld, Okome, Haynes, and boyd and Ellison collectively highlight how digital platforms are reshaping the global film industry. This also showcases their influence in regional industries such as Nollywood. Positioned within this context, the present study seeks to assess the role of social media in audiences awareness, interactions and sustained interest in film.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The high cost of digital promotion often creates doubts about whether social media campaigns yield a sufficient return on investment compared to traditional marketing approaches. While social media has transformed the film industry by providing real-time interaction, broader reach, and opportunities for participatory engagement, the expenses associated with creating consistent, high-quality digital content such as trailers, sponsored ads, influencer partnerships, and targeted campaigns remain significant. For many filmmakers, particularly within Nollywood, this raises the question of whether financial investments in social media campaigns directly translate into tangible outcomes such as increased ticket sales, higher streaming numbers, or long-term audience loyalty.

Adeyeye and Nwaoboli, in their article **“Impact of Social Media on the Marketing of Films in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria”**, observe that while social media offers filmmakers greater visibility and access to diverse audiences, its associated costs and the uncertainty of measurable returns create doubts for producers working with limited budgets (103). Similarly, Siva and Felisiya in *“Impact of Social Media Platform on Audience Engagement”* stress that algorithm

changes, content oversaturation, and digital divides pose significant barriers, often reducing the effectiveness of costly online campaigns (90).

As a result, many Nigerian filmmakers remain skeptical about whether the returns generated through social media engagement outweigh the investments, especially when compared to more traditional methods of film promotion such as radio jingles, television adverts, or cinema posters, which may cost less and reach audiences directly. This dilemma underscores the need for a systematic assessment of the true impact of social media on film audience engagement. Without such evaluation, filmmakers may continue to invest heavily in digital campaigns without clear evidence of their sustainability or profitability within the Nigerian film market.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

The central aims of this research is to assess the influence of social media in shaping film audience engagement.

1. To investigate how filmmakers and production companies use social media to promote films, particularly in industries like Nollywood.
2. To analyze the ways in which the audience interacts with film content through social media platforms.
3. To create awareness of social media strategies in building up the audience engagement and interactions with movies display.

4. Increasing audience participation by encouraging them to participate in film related discussions and activities on social media and manipulating how social media influences the audience decisions on the type of movies to watch

1.4 Research Questions

1. How does filmmakers and production companies use social media to promote films, particularly in industries like Nollywood?
2. In what ways does the audience interacts with film content through social media platforms?
3. How can we create awareness of social media strategies in building up the audience engagement and interaction with movies display?
4. How can we increase audience participation and how can we encourage them to participate in film related discussions on social media?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it explores how social media has reshaped the interaction between films and their audiences. In *The Rise of the Network Society*, Manuel Castells explains that the emergence of digital networks has changed how communication flows across societies (Castells 44). This highlights the need to study how film industries are using social media platforms as networked spaces to sustain audience engagement.

For filmmakers and marketers, this research is valuable. Philip Kotler, in his book *Marketing Management*, stresses that customer engagement and relationship marketing are central to building brand loyalty (Kotler 113). This explains why filmmakers increasingly rely on

interactive social media campaigns to capture attention and retain audience interest. This showcases how findings from this study can help film marketers determine whether digital engagement translates into actual patronage, such as cinema attendance or streaming subscriptions.

For the academic community, the study contributes to debates on participatory media culture. Henry Jenkins, in *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, argues that audiences are now active participants who create, circulate, and remix cultural content (Jenkins 3). This highlights how the study showcases the way film audiences use platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok to promote conversations around movies, from sharing reviews to generating fan content.

For film audiences themselves, the research is equally significant. In *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications*, Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld demonstrate that interpersonal communication strongly influences decision-making processes (Katz and Lazarsfeld 32). This explains how, in today's context, online conversations, reviews, and influencer commentary on platforms like YouTube and Instagram guide audience choices. This showcases the power of audience voices in shaping film reputations and commercial success.

For the Nigerian film industry (Nollywood), the study holds great importance. Onokome Okome, in *Nollywood: spectatorship, Audiences and the Sites of Consumption*, argues that Nollywood thrives by adapting to shifting forms of distribution and audience engagement (Okome 77). This highlights how social media has become a tool for expanding Nollywood's reach both locally and globally. Similarly, Jonathan Haynes in *Nollywood: The Creation of Nigerian Film Genres* explains that Nollywood's international visibility is tied to audience participation and

digital promotion (Haynes 56). This showcases how Nollywood stakeholders can strengthen global recognition through strategic use of social media.

Finally, for policy makers and industry stakeholders, the study is significant. Danah Boyd and Nicole Ellison, in their book *Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship*, note that digital platforms create both opportunities for visibility and challenges of oversaturation (boyd and Ellison 220). This highlights that the study can guide cultural policymakers to promote digital literacy, regulate online marketing strategies, and encourage innovation in the film industry.

In summary, this study is significant on multiple levels. As Castells explains in *The Rise of the Network Society*, digital platforms are transforming communication flows (Castells 44). As Kotler demonstrates in *Marketing Management*, engagement drives loyalty (Kotler 113). As Jenkins argues in *Convergence Culture*, audiences are active participants (Jenkins 3). As Katz and Lazarsfeld show in *Personal Influence*, interpersonal influence guides decisions (Katz and Lazarsfeld 32). As Okome and Haynes explain in their studies on Nollywood, adaptability and participation drive global recognition (Okome 77; Haynes 56). And as boyd and Ellison emphasize in *Social Network Sites*, the digital space creates new challenges and opportunities (boyd and Ellison 220). Collectively, these perspectives showcase why assessing the impact of social media on film audience engagement is both timely and important.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is limited to assessing the impact of social media on film audience engagement within the Nigerian film industry, with particular emphasis on Nollywood productions. It will examine how platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and YouTube influence audience behavior, including film awareness, interest, attendance, online reviews, and sustained loyalty to film brands. Scholars have noted that social media provides an interactive space where audiences not only consume but also co-create publicity around films, thereby enhancing participation and viewership (Jenkins 23; Adeyeye 41). By narrowing the focus to the Nigerian film context, the study intends to highlight the unique patterns of social media usage within a developing film industry that has a growing global reach.

Furthermore, the study will concentrate on film audiences within urban centers in Nigeria, where social media penetration is highest and online conversations about Nollywood are most active. It will not extend to rural areas with limited digital connectivity, nor will it attempt to cover the entire global film audience. The scope will also be confined to analyzing social media's role as a promotional and engagement tool rather than exploring broader aspects such as film production or distribution logistics. As noted by Ekwuazi, situating Nollywood research within its immediate socio-cultural context ensures findings remain grounded and relevant (57). By setting these boundaries, the research ensures a manageable focus that provides meaningful insights into the direct relationship between social media activities and audience engagement with Nigerian films.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews existing literature and theoretical perspectives relevant to the study of how social media influences film audience engagement. It provides a conceptual foundation by examining the meaning and characteristics of social media, tracing its emergence as a transformative tool in global communication. The chapter further explores the idea of film audience engagement, highlighting how traditional audience interaction with films once limited to cinema attendance and word of mouth has expanded into dynamic participation on digital platforms. Attention is given to how platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (X), YouTube, and TikTok have redefined audience behavior, making viewers active participants who share opinions, create content, and shape conversations around films. The review also draws upon relevant theories, including the Uses and Gratifications Theory, Diffusion of Innovations, Two-Step Flow, Engagement Theory, and the AIDA model, to explain the mechanisms through which social media drives interaction and shapes audience experiences. By analyzing these concepts and frameworks, the chapter establishes the academic grounding necessary for assessing the impact of social media on film audience engagement, thereby providing the context for the study's findings and discussion.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

2.2.1 Social Media

Social media refers to the collection of digital platforms and technologies that enable users to create, share, and exchange information in virtual communities and networks. Kaplan and

Haenlein define it as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (61). Unlike traditional media, social media thrives on interactivity, immediacy, and user participation, making it a powerful tool for film industries seeking to engage audiences.

In the context of film promotion and audience engagement, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter (X), and YouTube play pivotal roles in shaping how films are marketed and consumed. These platforms serve as channels for film producers and distributors to share trailers, teasers, behind-the-scenes clips, posters, and live interactions with stars (Evans 114). For audiences, they offer interactive spaces to comment, share opinions, create fan-based content, and influence the broader narrative around a film (Boyd 45).

Furthermore, social media platforms provide metrics for measurable engagement, including likes, shares, comments, hashtags, and video views. These metrics enable filmmakers and marketers to track audience response in real time and adjust strategies accordingly (Smith 203). The virality of a film trailer on TikTok, for example, can increase pre-release anticipation, while trends on Twitter (X) can sustain conversations long after a film’s theatrical release (Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit 14).

Social media also contributes to the formation of online fan communities. These communities, organized through hashtags, Facebook groups, or dedicated fan pages, foster sustained engagement even after a film’s release (Baym 77). They enable audiences to share interpretations, debate themes, and influence film producers by demanding sequels, spinoffs, or alternative narratives (Jenkins 5). Such communities demonstrate that social media extends the lifespan of films beyond the cinema halls into ongoing digital discourse.

Moreover, social media has democratized film marketing by reducing dependence on traditional advertising. Independent filmmakers and smaller production houses can now reach large audiences with limited budgets through viral campaigns, influencer marketing, and interactive storytelling on platforms like Instagram Reels or TikTok (Holt and Sanson 211). This democratization of publicity underscores social media's role as an equalizer in the film industry.

Within the conceptual framework of this study, social media is conceptualized as both a distribution channel and a participatory platform. It is a dynamic ecosystem where information, interaction, personalization, and community-building converge to shape audience perceptions, preferences, and behaviors toward films. By recognizing its interactive and participatory nature, this research highlights social media as the central driver of modern film audience engagement.

2.2.2 Film Audience

The concept of the film audience is central to any discussion of cinema, marketing, and media studies. A film audience refers to the group of individuals who consume film content either through cinema halls, television, DVDs, streaming platforms, or, more recently, through digital and social media spaces. Audiences are not a homogenous body; rather, they are diverse in terms of age, class, education, cultural background, and viewing preferences. Understanding who the film audience is and how they interact with films is crucial for analyzing the effectiveness of social media in enhancing engagement.

Traditionally, film audiences were perceived as passive consumers who gathered in cinemas to watch films without much influence on production or marketing decisions. This view was in line with early media effects theories that treated audiences as receivers of content shaped

entirely by filmmakers and distributors. However, contemporary scholarship challenges this notion by presenting the audience as active participants in meaning-making and promotion. Today, audiences interpret films differently depending on their cultural experiences, and they increasingly influence the visibility and success of films through discussions, reviews, and digital interactions.

In the context of Nollywood, the audience plays a particularly important role because the industry thrives on mass appeal and grassroots support. Nigerian audiences are deeply invested in stories that reflect their cultural realities, aspirations, and social struggles. Students, who form a vibrant and digitally savvy segment of this audience, are especially significant. At the University of Benin, for instance, students consume Nollywood films not only for entertainment but also as a way to affirm cultural identity, discuss societal issues, and connect with peers. Their engagement is multidimensional: they watch films in campus cinemas, share opinions on WhatsApp groups, participate in Twitter discussions, and even create skits or memes inspired by Nollywood movies.

The rise of social media has redefined what it means to be a film audience. Audiences now extend beyond physical spaces into virtual communities where interaction is immediate and global. Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have blurred the line between audience and promoter. A student posting a reaction video to a Nollywood trailer becomes part of the marketing chain, helping to shape wider public perception. In this sense, film audiences are no longer passive consumers but co-creators of film culture, actively engaging in the circulation, critique, and re-imagining of film texts.

Moreover, the concept of the audience today includes not only spectatorship but also participation and feedback. For example, audience comments on trailers can influence whether others will choose to watch the film. Similarly, hashtag campaigns such as WatchNollywood or

NaijaCinema encourage collective audience action that boosts film visibility. This interactive role of audiences is at the heart of this research because it highlights how UNIBEN students, as part of the film audience, shape engagement and marketing outcomes in Nollywood through their social media activities.

Therefore, understanding the film audience is critical for this study. It demonstrates that the audience is not a passive group waiting to be persuaded but an active agent in the circulation and success of film culture. The University of Benin students, as a case study, embody the new generation of film audiences whose habits, preferences, and online practices redefine how films are marketed and consumed in Nigeria.

2.3 Role of Social Media in Film Marketing

Social media has grown into an indispensable tool in modern film marketing, transforming the way films are advertised, distributed, and consumed. Unlike traditional marketing strategies, which depended on billboards, radio jingles, and TV ads, social media thrives on interactivity, personalization, and virality. Kerrigan notes in *Film Marketing* that the film industry has shifted from one-way promotional strategies to multi-directional dialogues that place the audience at the heart of marketing activities (Kerrigan 12).

One of the critical roles of social media in film marketing is real-time audience engagement. Film producers and marketers can immediately respond to audience reactions, complaints, and suggestions through comments, likes, and shares. This responsiveness creates a sense of intimacy between the filmmakers and their audience. According to Kaplan and Haenlein in *Users of the World, Unite!* (2010), interactivity on platforms such as Twitter and Facebook establishes a two-

way communication flow that enhances consumer trust and attachment to the film brand (Kaplan and Haenlein 65).

Additionally, social media serves as a platform for content diversity in film promotion. Trailers, teasers, posters, behind-the-scenes clips, fan challenges, and even memes are circulated on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to sustain audience excitement. Wayne argues in **Netflix, Streaming Services and Disruption** (2018) that film marketing today is as much about sustaining ongoing audience conversation as it is about announcing film releases (Wayne 103). A prime example is how the **Barbie** (2023) movie campaign used viral memes and TikTok trends to generate a global cultural phenomenon before release.

Another essential role is crowd sourced promotion and fan-made content. Audiences are not just consumers but co-creators of marketing content. Jenkins in **Convergence Culture** emphasizes that fans play an active role in shaping and circulating media texts, often amplifying film campaigns beyond the control of marketers (Jenkins 137). Fan art, parody videos, and reaction videos on YouTube and TikTok become extensions of official marketing campaigns, strengthening the film's cultural relevance.

Social media also plays a role in shaping audience perception through influencer marketing. Influencers and celebrities with large online followings often endorse upcoming films by attending premieres, sharing sponsored posts, or creating themed content. As Djafarova and Trofimenko observe in their article **'Instafamous' – credibility and self-presentation of micro-celebrities on social media** (2019), influencer endorsements on platforms like Instagram enhance audience trust and translate into higher consumer engagement (Djafarova and Trofimenko 91).

Moreover, social media contributes to data-driven decision-making in film marketing. Platforms provide analytics that reveal which trailers are most engaging, which demographic interacts more, and which hashtags trend higher. Smith and Telang note in **Streaming, Sharing, Stealing** that the data-driven environment of digital platforms allows film producers to refine campaigns and minimize marketing risks by targeting the right audiences more effectively (Smith and Telang 54).

For independent and Nollywood filmmakers, social media has become a cost-effective alternative to mainstream advertising. Instead of depending on expensive TV spots, filmmakers utilize Instagram reels, WhatsApp groups, and YouTube campaigns to build anticipation. Olayinka in **Nollywood: The Influence of Social Media on Film Promotion** (2019) stresses that Nigerian filmmakers increasingly rely on digital platforms to reach diasporic communities and mobilize grassroots publicity at little or no cost (Olayinka 77).

Finally, social media enhances global interconnectedness of film campaigns. A Nigerian film promoted on Instagram can reach audiences in London or Toronto instantly, reflecting how the digital space erases geographical boundaries. As Hartley puts it in **Communication, Cultural and Media Studies** (2012), digital platforms globalize cultural products while maintaining local cultural flavors, giving films a dual identity that appeals to both domestic and international audiences (Hartley 116).

In conclusion, social media plays a multifaceted role in film marketing facilitating audience engagement, amplifying publicity, supporting fan co-creation, enabling influencer-driven campaigns, and ensuring cost effective global reach. Its integration into film marketing has

redefined how films are consumed and remembered, placing audiences at the center of the promotional ecosystem.

2.4 Empirical Review

Several Empirical studies have examined the impact of social media on film marketing and audience engagement, providing valuable insights that informs the present research on university of Benin student. This studies shows how filmmakers, marketers and audiences uses digital platforms in ways that significantly transform the film industry.

Kerrigan's (2010) influential work **Film Marketing** remains one of the most comprehensive studies on the changing dynamics of film promotion in the digital era. At the time of her research, social media platforms were beginning to disrupt traditional advertising methods, and her study provided an early scholarly exploration of how this transformation affected audience engagement. To achieve this, Kerrigan employed a qualitative and comparative methodology, drawing on case studies from both Hollywood and the British film industry. She carefully analyzed a variety of marketing campaigns, comparing conventional practices such as posters, television trailers, and print adverts with emerging strategies that involved YouTube teasers, Facebook fan pages, and other interactive online tools. In addition to textual analysis of these campaigns, Kerrigan interviewed key stakeholders, including film producers, marketers, and distributors. This approach allowed her to highlight not only the structural changes in film marketing but also the cultural and social factors that shaped these new practices.

Her findings revealed a major shift in the relationship between films and their audiences. Rather than being passive recipients of promotional messages, audiences were becoming active

participants in the marketing process. Social media platforms created interactive spaces where audiences could comment on, share, or even remix promotional content. Kerrigan argued that this development gave rise to what she called the “co-creation of value.” In this model, audiences were not merely consumers but collaborators who actively contributed to the visibility and circulation of films.

The relevance of Kerrigan’s study to this research on University of Benin students cannot be overstated. Just as she found in Western contexts, Nigerian youths are deeply immersed in digital cultures and actively participate in online film conversations. Students at UNIBEN, who are highly active on platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp, reflect the participatory model Kerrigan described. Nollywood films often trend online not solely because of official trailers, but because audiences themselves create discussions, memes, and skits that generate buzz. Kerrigan’s emphasis on co-creation therefore provides a vital framework for understanding how social media functions as both a marketing tool and a cultural space in which audiences shape the success of films.

In essence, Kerrigan’s (2010) study bridges the gap between traditional and digital marketing while emphasizing the crucial role of audiences in sustaining film visibility. Her work offers both theoretical and practical lessons for Nigerian filmmakers, particularly within the Nollywood industry, and underscores the need for strategies that prioritize audience participation. This is directly applicable to the case of UNIBEN students, who represent a youthful, digitally savvy demographic that actively engages with film promotion and consumption through social media platforms.

Adeyeye's (2019) study on social media and Nollywood film promotion is one of the most significant Nigerian contributions to scholarship on digital marketing and audience engagement. His work specifically explored how social media platforms have become indispensable tools for Nollywood filmmakers in reaching, engaging, and sustaining audiences, particularly among urban youth. Unlike earlier studies that primarily focused on the structural challenges of Nollywood such as piracy, funding, and censorship, Adeyeye's research turned attention to the opportunities offered by digital technology in reshaping the film industry.

Adeyeye used a mixed-methods approach that combined surveys and interviews with Lagos-based audiences and key industry practitioners. The survey sampled young adults, many of whom represented the most active demographic on platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Respondents were asked structured questions about how they first discovered new Nollywood films, how often they engaged with film content online, and what motivated them to share or comment on film promotions.

The findings of the study revealed a striking shift in how Nigerian audiences encounter and respond to Nollywood films. More than 65 percent of respondents reported that they first heard about upcoming films through social media posts rather than through traditional means such as posters, radio jingles, or television adverts. Instagram was highlighted as the most influential platform, particularly because Nollywood stars used it to share behind-the-scenes clips, teaser trailers, and promotional skits. Twitter was also shown to be a central space for conversations about films, especially when hashtags were created to generate trends and debates. The interviews with filmmakers confirmed that these strategies were deliberate, with many producers choosing to invest more in digital campaigns than in costly traditional media adverts.

Adeyeye observed that social media promotions had a unique capacity to humanize film stars and create a sense of intimacy between celebrities and audiences. For instance, when actors responded directly to fan comments or shared humorous personal moments, audiences felt more connected to them, which in turn encouraged higher levels of engagement with their films. In this way, social media blurred the line between promotion and personal interaction, making audiences feel as though they were part of the film's journey even before its release.

A particularly important aspect of Adeyeye's findings was the role of audience participation in shaping film visibility. He noted that Nollywood films increasingly gained traction not just through official campaigns but through the secondary circulation of content created by audiences. Memes, user-generated skits, and humorous reviews often amplified film visibility beyond what producers could achieve alone. In this sense, the audience became co-promoters of Nollywood films, a phenomenon similar to Kerrigan's (2010) observation of "co-creation of value" in global contexts.

As young digital natives, UNIBEN students are part of the demographic that Adeyeye identified as central to Nollywood's social media success. They are likely to discover new films through Instagram reels, Twitter conversations, and WhatsApp group shares rather than through cinema posters or conventional advertisements. The fact that Adeyeye's respondents indicated greater excitement for films promoted via interactive campaigns such as influencer endorsements, hashtag challenges, and fan contests suggests that similar patterns are present within student communities.

Moreover, Adeyeye's research underscores the importance of cultural relatability in social media campaigns. He pointed out that Nollywood filmmakers who use humor, slang, and

references that resonate with Nigerian youth often achieve higher levels of engagement. This is particularly relevant for UNIBEN students, who are drawn to campaigns that reflect their everyday experiences, campus humor, or popular cultural references. By creating content that speaks to these realities, Nollywood filmmakers can generate not only attention but also sustained conversations within student communities.

Nwafor and Koro's (2020) research stands out as a significant contribution to understanding the growing intersection between social media and film consumption in Nigeria. Their study, conducted within the context of Nollywood, explored how audience engagement on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube influences film visibility, popularity, and ultimately its commercial success. The central aim of their work was to assess how interactive platforms transform passive film spectators into active participants in the promotion and critique of films.

Nwafor and Koro research was primarily survey-based, combined with focus group discussions. They sampled both university students and young professionals. The University of Lagos and other tertiary institutions provided a significant portion of their respondents, offering insight into how student audiences consume and respond to film content online. Nwafor and Koro discovered that social media has created a space where audiences feel empowered to shape conversations around films. Unlike the traditional one-way promotional methods such as posters, TV trailers, and radio jingles, social media allowed for interactive feedback between filmmakers and their audiences. For instance, Twitter "film threads" and Instagram live sessions with actors encouraged a form of participatory culture, where the line between producers and consumers blurred. Students reported that they often judged whether to watch a new Nollywood release based

on trending hashtags or the reactions of peers in online groups. Thus, social media not only functioned as a publicity tool but also as a decision-making guide for audiences.

Smaller independent filmmakers who lacked the resources for large-scale advertising could rely on viral posts, influencer reviews, and word-of-mouth sharing to reach large audiences at relatively low cost. This study highlighted how certain films gained traction among young audiences simply because popular skit makers or social media influencers endorsed them. This showed that engagement was not only about audience interaction but also about how filmmakers strategically tapped into existing online networks.

In the end, Nwafor and Koro argued that Nollywood filmmakers need to embrace social media not merely as a publicity platform but as a dynamic space for dialogue, engagement, and even co-creation with audiences. They emphasized the importance of training film production companies to develop social media management strategies that balance promotion with monitoring, audience feedback, and intellectual property protection.

Overall, Nwafor and Koro's (2020) research demonstrates that social media is no longer peripheral to the Nigerian film industry but central to its survival and growth. Their study reinforces the idea that today's film audience is not a passive viewer but an active participant whose tweets, likes, comments, and shares contribute directly to a film's success. In the context of a university-based case study such as the University of Benin, their work provides a useful foundation for understanding how young Nigerian students engage with films and shape Nollywood's digital future.

2.5 Theatrical framework

There are several theories that deals with audience perception

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications Theory, originally developed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974), suggests that media audiences are active users who select media content based on specific needs such as entertainment, information, social interaction, or identity-building. This perspective is important for this study because it frames UNIBEN students not as passive recipients of film advertisements, but as active participants who deliberately use social media to satisfy particular needs.

For instance, students may engage with film trailers on Instagram or YouTube to gain information about upcoming Nollywood releases, while others might participate in Twitter discussions to establish a sense of community with fellow fans. The theory therefore provides insight into the diverse motivations behind audience engagement. It also helps explain why social media is more powerful than traditional media: it allows users to engage interactively, seeking gratification through likes, comments, shares, and even creating memes or reviews.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory

Proposed by Everett Rogers (1962), the Diffusion of Innovations Theory explains how new ideas and technologies spread within a community. Applied to this study, the theory sheds light on how social media platforms like TikTok, Twitter, and Instagram have revolutionized the way films are marketed and consumed.

In the University of Benin context, students act as early adopters of digital technologies. When a film trend or hashtag begins, it is often the students who quickly adopt and spread it,

influencing peers within their networks. This diffusion process is critical to Nollywood's marketing strategies. For example, once a Nollywood film trailer is shared on Twitter or WhatsApp by a few influential students, it can quickly circulate through student communities, thereby amplifying awareness and engagement. This theory, therefore, highlights how social media accelerates film promotion and how students themselves play a role in shaping diffusion patterns.

Participatory Culture Theory

Henry Jenkins' (2006) Participatory Culture Theory emphasizes the shift from media consumption to media participation. Unlike traditional media, where audiences merely received content, participatory culture involves audiences actively shaping media narratives through contributions such as fan fiction, memes, parodies, reviews, and online discussions.

This is directly relevant to the present research. University of Benin students are not only consumers of Nollywood films but also active contributors to how these films are perceived. On TikTok, for example, students might create short skits inspired by Nollywood plots, while others may remix trailers with their own commentary. These practices increase visibility and generate buzz around films, making audiences co-creators of promotional content. Thus, participatory culture explains why social media is no longer just a platform for marketing but also a space where audiences influence a film's success or failure.

Two-Step Flow Theory

Paul Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz's (1955) Two-Step Flow Theory argues that media effects are mediated by opinion leaders who influence others in their social networks. In today's context, these opinion leaders often manifest as influencers, bloggers, or popular social media personalities.

For this project, the theory is crucial because it highlights how UNIBEN students do not all engage equally with Nollywood film content. Instead, a few influential voices student leaders, campus celebrities, or active Twitter/X personalities may shape the opinions and engagement of their peers. For instance, if a well-followed student posts a positive review or shares a trailer, it is likely to attract the attention of a wider student audience. This underscores the role of peer influence and digital opinion leadership in film audience engagement.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design. The survey design is most appropriate because the research seeks to assess the impact of social media on film audience engagement, focusing on the perspectives and experiences of students at the University of Benin. The design enables the researcher to collect data directly from a large group of respondents, analyze their responses, and draw conclusions about patterns of audience engagement through social media platforms. According to Orodho (2003), survey research design is suitable for studies that describe the characteristics, opinions, attitudes, and behaviors of a specific population.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises undergraduate students of the University of Benin. This group has been chosen because students represent an active and digitally literate demographic who frequently use social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter (X), Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp for film-related discussions and engagement. Nollywood films are particularly popular among university students, making them an ideal case study for analyzing how social media influences audience interaction.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Given the large student population at the University of Benin, a sample size of 100 students will be selected to make the research manageable and representative. The sampling technique employed will be stratified random sampling. The strata will be based on faculties, ensuring that

students from different academic backgrounds are represented. Within each faculty, simple random sampling will be used to select participants. This approach helps reduce bias and ensures that the sample accurately reflects the diversity of the student population.

3.4 Research Instruments

The main instrument for data collection will be the questionnaire. The questionnaire will contain both closed-ended and open-ended questions to capture quantitative data (such as frequency of film engagement on social media) and qualitative insights (such as personal opinions on how social media influences their film choices). The questions will be structured around the research objectives and may include areas such as:

- i. The extent to which students use social media for film-related purposes.
- ii. How filmmakers' use of social media impacts student awareness and interest in Nollywood films.
- iii. The ways students interact with film content (liking, sharing, commenting, reviewing).
- iv. Strategies that encourage more participation in online film-related discussions.

The questionnaire will be pre-tested with a small group of students to check for clarity and reliability before final administration.

3.5 Method of Data Collection

Data will be collected through the administration of questionnaires to the selected students. The researcher will distribute the questionnaires physically on campus and, where necessary,

through digital platforms such as Google Forms to enhance accessibility. Respondents will be assured of confidentiality and encouraged to provide honest responses.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected will be analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data from closed-ended questions will be coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency tables, percentages, and charts to illustrate patterns of audience engagement. Qualitative data from open-ended questions will be thematically analyzed to capture deeper insights into students' experiences and perceptions of social media's role in film engagement. The analysis will be presented in alignment with the research questions and objectives.

3.7 Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodological framework for the study. It described the research design, population, sample size, sampling technique, and research instrument, methods of data collection and analysis, as well as reliability, validity, and ethical considerations. The methodology is designed to provide reliable and valid findings that will address the research objectives of assessing the impact of social media on film audience engagement among University of Benin students.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents, analyzes, and interprets the data collected through a questionnaire distributed to fifty (50) students of the University of Benin (UNIBEN). The purpose of the study was to assess the impact of social media on film audience engagement among UNIBEN students, focusing on their social media habits, level of interaction with Nollywood film content, and perceptions of online promotions. The data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and thematic analysis of open-ended responses.

4.2 Demographic Data of Respondents

This section presents the demographic information of the respondents, including their gender, age range, level of study, faculty, and most used social media platform for film content. These variables help to contextualize the respondents' perspectives on social media engagement with Nollywood films.

4.2.1 Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	21	42%
Female	29	58%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation:

Male (21 – 42%): Twenty-one respondents identified as male, representing 42 percent of the sample. This shows that a significant minority of the participants are men.

Female (29 – 58%): Twenty-nine respondents identified as female, representing 58 percent. Females therefore slightly outnumber males in the study.

Total (50 – 100%): Altogether, 50 valid responses were analysed, confirming full participation.

The small female majority implies that the results may reflect slightly stronger female interest in film-related social-media discussions, though both genders are adequately represented.

The result shows that 58% of respondents are female, while 42% are male. This suggests that female students were slightly more represented in the survey and may show more interest in film-related content and discussions on social media.

4.2.2 Age Range of Respondents

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 18 years	5	10%
18 – 25 years	37	74%
26 – 35 years	7	14%
36 years and above	1	2%

Total	50	100%
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Source: field survey, 2025

Interpretation:

The table shows that the majority of respondents (74%) fall within the 18–25 age bracket, which represents the typical university student population. This age group is also the most active demographic on social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram.

4.2.3 Level of Study of Respondents

Level of Study	Frequency	Percentage (%)
100 – 200 Level	6	12%
300 Level	9	18%
400 Level	27	54%
500 Level	8	16%
Total	50	100%

Source: field survey, 2025

Interpretation:

Over half of the respondents (54%) are 400-level students, showing that most participants are in their final year of study. This may imply higher maturity and exposure to both Nollywood content and social media use compared to lower-level students.

4.2.4 Faculty Distribution of Respondents

Faculty	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Arts	36	72%
Social Sciences	3	6%
Engineering	5	10%
Education	1	2%
Mass Communication	1	2%
Environmental Science	1	2%
Law	1	2%
Total	50	100%

Source: field survey, 2025

Interpretation:

Most respondents (72%) belong to the Faculty of Arts. This dominance is expected because film, theatre, and performance-related interests are more common among Arts students. Other faculties are represented in smaller proportions.

4.2.5 Most Used Social Media Platform for Film Content

Platform	Frequency	Percentage (%)
TikTok	17	34%
Instagram	10	20%
WhatsApp	6	12%
Facebook	6	12%
YouTube	6	12%
Twitter (X)	3	6%
Others	2	4%
Total	50	100%

Source: field survey, 2025

Interpretation:

TikTok is the most widely used platform (34%) among UNIBEN students for accessing Nollywood film content, followed by Instagram (20%). This finding supports the view that short-form and visually engaging platforms have become dominant spaces for audience interaction with film promotions.

4.3 Responses on the Impact of Social Media on Film Audience Engagement

This section presents and analyzes data collected from 50 respondents on how social media influences students' engagement with Nollywood films. The responses reveal the level of

awareness, participation, and perception of Nollywood’s social media presence among University of Benin students.

4.3.1 Awareness of Nollywood Content through Social Media

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	30	60%
Agree	15	30%
Neutral	3	6%
Disagree	2	4%
Total	50	100%

Source: field survey, 2025

Interpretation:

A combined 90% of respondents agree that they became aware of Nollywood films through social media. This suggests that social media platforms are key promotional tools for the Nigerian film industry among young audiences.

4.3.2 Social Media Makes Nollywood Films More Accessible

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	28	56%
Agree	17	34%
Neutral	3	6%
Disagree	2	4%
Total	50	100%

Source: field survey, 2025

Interpretation:

90% of respondents believe that social media improves the accessibility of Nollywood films, as students often view trailers, interviews, and behind-the-scenes content online.

4.3.3 Social Media Influences Students' Choice of Films to Watch

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	20	40%
Agree	22	44%
Neutral	5	10%
Disagree	3	6%
Total	50	100%

Source: field survey, 2025

Interpretation:

A total of 84% of respondents agree that social media recommendations and film trends affect their viewing decisions. This underlines the persuasive role of online publicity and peer influence in film consumption.

4.3.4 Students Interact with Nollywood Film Content Online

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	14	28%
Agree	25	50%
Neutral	6	12%
Disagree	5	10%
Total	50	100%

Source: field survey, 2025

Interpretation:

78% of respondents report engaging with Nollywood content through likes, comments, and shares.

This demonstrates moderate to high participation in online film discussions.

4.3.5 Social Media Promotes Interaction Between Filmmakers and Audiences

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	18	36%
Agree	21	42%
Neutral	6	12%
Disagree	5	10%
Total	50	100%

Source: field survey, 2025

Interpretation:

78% of respondents believe social media has reduced the communication gap between filmmakers and audiences, creating opportunities for feedback, reviews, and fan engagement.

4.3.6 Social Media Encourages Student Participation in Film Discussions

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	16	32%
Agree	23	46%
Neutral	7	14%
Disagree	4	8%
Total	50	100%

Source: field survey, 2025

Interpretation:

Most respondents (78%) acknowledge that social media encourages active participation in film-related discussions, with platforms like TikTok and X (Twitter) providing space for sharing opinions on movie quality, casting, and storytelling.

4.3.7 Social Media Improves Nollywood’s Global Visibility

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	27	54%
Agree	17	34%
Neutral	4	8%
Disagree	2	4%
Total	50	100%

Source: field survey, 2025

Interpretation:

An overwhelming 88% of respondents agree that social media has helped project Nollywood to global audiences, allowing Nigerian films to reach diasporic and international viewers.

4.3.8 Students Prefer Film Updates from Social Media over Traditional Media

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	19	38%
Agree	20	40%
Neutral	6	12%
Disagree	5	10%
Total	50	100%

Source: field survey, 2025

Interpretation:

78% of students prefer to receive film updates and news via social media instead of television or radio. This supports the argument that digital media is the dominant source of film-related information among youth.

4.3.9 Social Media Reviews Affect Students' Perception of Nollywood Films

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	15	30%
Agree	22	44%
Neutral	8	16%
Disagree	5	10%
Total	50	100%

Source: field survey, 2025

Interpretation:

Most respondents (74%) report that online reviews influence their perception of Nollywood films.

Negative or positive audience reactions can therefore affect box office performance and popularity.

4.3.10 Overall Impact of Social Media on Nollywood Audience Engagement

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	26	52%
Agree	18	36%
Neutral	4	8%
Disagree	2	4%
Total	50	100%

Source: field survey, 2025

Interpretation:

88% of respondents affirm that social media has a *significant positive impact* on audience engagement with Nollywood. This confirms that digital interaction plays a vital role in promoting, discussing, and shaping students' viewing habits.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The findings from this study clearly indicate that social media has a significant impact on film audience engagement among students of the University of Benin. The results show that the majority of the respondents have become aware of Nollywood films through social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter). This demonstrates that social media has become the dominant source of film awareness and promotion, replacing traditional media like radio, television, and posters. The responses confirm that students rely heavily on online platforms to stay informed about new Nollywood releases, trailers, and celebrity

updates. This supports Adeyeye (2019), who notes that digital media has revolutionized audience reach and engagement, particularly among the youth population.

The study also found that social media has made Nollywood films more accessible to students. Most respondents agreed that they now interact with film content more easily through mobile devices, online streaming, and short clips on social media. This aligns with the argument by Nwafor and Koro (2020) that social media and digital platforms have democratized film consumption by removing barriers of cost and location. For students, access to Nollywood films is no longer limited to cinemas or DVDs; rather, social media now offers quick, flexible, and affordable exposure to diverse film content.

Another important finding is that social media influences the students' choice of films to watch. A large percentage of respondents admitted that online trends, recommendations, and reviews affect their viewing decisions. When a film gains popularity or becomes a topic of discussion on platforms like TikTok or Twitter, many students feel motivated to watch it to stay part of the conversation. This finding emphasizes the persuasive power of social influence in digital spaces. It also supports Adeyeye's (2019) observation that film audiences today are shaped by online conversations and digital marketing, which play a central role in determining what becomes popular.

Furthermore, the study revealed that most students actively engage with Nollywood content on social media by liking, sharing, and commenting on posts, or by participating in discussions about films. This shows that audiences are no longer passive consumers but active participants in the promotion and interpretation of film culture. Such interaction aligns with the concept of participatory culture described by Jenkins (2009), which highlights how audiences co-

create meaning and value through online activities. Students of the University of Benin, therefore, contribute to sustaining interest in Nollywood beyond the initial release period of a film.

The research also found that social media serves as a bridge between filmmakers and their audiences. Many respondents believe that social media platforms allow filmmakers to directly communicate with fans, respond to feedback, and share behind-the-scenes updates. This has created a sense of intimacy and inclusion, giving audiences a feeling of involvement in the filmmaking process. Nwafor and Koro (2020) similarly observe that the two-way communication enabled by social media has made audiences more vocal and empowered in shaping film narratives and industry practices.

Additionally, findings show that social media has played a major role in improving Nollywood's global visibility. Respondents agreed that through platforms such as YouTube and Instagram, Nigerian films are reaching international audiences and gaining recognition across different cultures. This reflects the globalizing potential of digital media as explained by Adeyeye (2019), who asserts that social media has helped position Nollywood as a major player in the global creative economy. Social media reviews and audience reactions also influence how students perceive Nollywood's quality and creativity, as many respondents admitted that online opinions shape their own expectations and evaluations of new films.

The study further revealed that most students prefer to receive film-related updates through social media rather than traditional media outlets. This finding highlights the ongoing shift in information consumption among young people, where mobile devices and digital platforms have replaced newspapers and television as the primary sources of entertainment news. It confirms

Nwafor and Koro's (2020) claim that audience engagement has migrated from static media forms to dynamic and interactive online spaces.

Overall, the findings confirm that social media has a strong and positive influence on Nollywood audience engagement among University of Benin students. It enhances awareness, accessibility, interaction, and perception of Nigerian films. Students are not only consumers but also active participants in the conversation around Nollywood. The results suggest that filmmakers and marketers must continue to use social media creatively through influencer campaigns, interactive posts, live Q&A sessions, and short-form video storytelling to sustain youth interest and attract new viewers.

In conclusion, this study establishes that social media is not just a channel of communication but a vital instrument for shaping how audiences discover, experience, and engage with Nollywood films in the digital age.

4.5 Conclusion on the Findings

The findings from this study reveal that social media plays an increasingly vital role in shaping audience engagement with Nollywood films among students of the University of Benin. It has become a primary platform through which students discover, interact with, and form opinions about Nigerian films. The data gathered from the questionnaire indicate that most students are highly active on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp, where they access film trailers, promotions, reviews, and celebrity updates.

From the responses analyzed, it is evident that social media not only enhances visibility for Nollywood films but also drives deeper emotional and participatory connections between

filmmakers and their audiences. Students engage with content through likes, shares, comments, and discussions, reflecting a shift from passive viewership to active participation. This participatory trend aligns with the contemporary media environment, where audiences are both consumers and promoters of the content they enjoy.

The study also concludes that social media influences students' film choices and attitudes toward Nollywood. Positive reviews, trending hashtags, and viral challenges often determine which films attract student attention. As a result, social media has emerged as a powerful marketing and communication tool for filmmakers aiming to reach younger audiences, especially within the university community. Moreover, the findings show that students value direct interaction with actors and producers online, as it creates a sense of inclusion and belonging in the wider Nollywood community.

Furthermore, the study finds that traditional media such as radio, television, and posters are gradually losing their influence on young audiences, who prefer the immediacy and flexibility that digital platforms provide. This confirms that social media is now the dominant space for film promotion and audience building in Nigeria's youth demographic.

In conclusion, the research establishes that social media has a positive and transformative impact on Nollywood audience engagement among UNIBEN students. It not only raises awareness but also fosters active interaction, shared experiences, and cultural participation. To sustain and deepen this engagement, Nollywood filmmakers should adopt more student-centered digital strategies such as relatable storytelling, interactive campaigns, behind the scenes content, and collaborations with student influencers. Doing so will not only strengthen audience loyalty but also ensure that Nollywood remains dynamic, accessible, and relevant in the evolving digital era.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary

This study assessed the impact of social media on film audience engagement among students of the University of Benin (UNIBEN). It explored how platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Facebook influence the way students discover, discuss, and interact with Nollywood films. The research was guided by the need to understand the changing patterns of film consumption among young audiences in the digital era, with a particular focus on university students as active participants in online film culture.

The problem statement of the study centered on the observation that although Nollywood remains one of the most productive film industries in the world, it faces challenges in sustaining strong audience engagement, particularly among young people who increasingly rely on social media for entertainment. Traditional means of film promotion, such as posters, television, and radio advertisements, appear less effective among this demographic. Consequently, there was a need to examine whether social media platforms have become a more powerful means of engaging young audiences and how this shift affects their viewing behavior, preferences, and participation in film discussions.

The objectives of the study were to examine the extent to which UNIBEN students use social media platforms to access Nollywood films, to determine how social media influences students' awareness and interest in Nigerian films, to assess the degree of interaction and participation among students in film-related discussions on social media, and to identify which platforms most effectively engage UNIBEN students as film audiences.

To provide a theoretical foundation for the study, the research employed two key theoretical frameworks: the Uses and Gratification Theory and the Participatory Culture Theory by Henry Jenkins. The Uses and Gratification Theory explains that audiences actively use media to satisfy specific needs such as entertainment, social interaction, and information. This theory helped clarify why UNIBEN students turn to social media for film-related content rather than relying solely on traditional media. The Participatory Culture Theory emphasizes that digital media allows audiences to contribute to, remix, and co-create content rather than simply consume it. This framework was useful in analyzing how UNIBEN students engage in interactive and creative participation through comments, memes, and online discussions around Nollywood films.

The study adopted the survey research design as its methodology. A structured questionnaire was administered to fifty (50) students randomly selected from different faculties across the University of Benin. The questions were designed to collect data on demographics (gender, age, faculty, and level), preferred social media platforms, frequency of film engagement, and opinions about social media's influence on Nollywood awareness. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentages and presented in tables for clarity and interpretation.

The results of the study revealed that social media plays a major role in shaping film audience engagement among UNIBEN students. TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube emerged as the most popular platforms through which students discover and interact with Nollywood content. The findings showed that most students are influenced by online trends, recommendations, and influencer opinions when deciding which films to watch. Furthermore, the study discovered that students use social media not only for viewing but also for commenting, sharing, and participating in film-related conversations, demonstrating an active form of audience engagement.

Additionally, the study found that female students slightly outnumbered males in film-related online participation, and most respondents were aged 18–25, representing the most active digital demographic. The research also indicated that social media provides faster and more effective film publicity than traditional media, as it allows direct interaction between filmmakers and audiences.

Overall, the findings confirmed that social media has significantly transformed the relationship between Nollywood and its younger audience. It has created a participatory environment where students do not just consume films but actively engage with them through dialogue, creativity, and social connection.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that social media has a significant and positive impact on Nollywood audience engagement among UNIBEN students. It serves as the main medium through which students discover, interact with, and form opinions about films. The study clearly shows that digital media has replaced traditional forms of film publicity, as students now rely heavily on online platforms for entertainment updates and film-related information.

Social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube have transformed students from being passive viewers into active participants in the Nollywood ecosystem. Through likes, shares, comments, and discussions, students contribute to the promotion and public image of films. This reflects the evolution of media consumption in the digital age, where audiences co-create meaning and value through online engagement.

The study also concludes that social media not only enhances the visibility of Nollywood films but also fosters a sense of community among young audiences. Students are drawn to content that reflects their realities, cultural identity, and social experiences. Therefore, filmmakers and producers must leverage social media to maintain direct communication with their audience and to build loyal fan communities.

Social media has redefined how Nollywood interacts with its youth audience. Its impact among UNIBEN students demonstrates that digital platforms are not merely tools for promotion but essential spaces for dialogue, creativity, and cultural participation. To sustain this engagement, Nollywood filmmakers must adopt more innovative, student centered strategies that encourage interactivity, inclusion, and shared storytelling. Through this, social media will continue to serve as a bridge connecting Nigerian filmmakers and the new generation of film enthusiasts.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several recommendations are proposed to improve film audience engagement in Nollywood through social media, especially among students of the University of Benin.

First, Nollywood filmmakers should adopt more interactive social media strategies. Rather than relying solely on posting trailers or posters, they should engage audiences through live sessions, question and answer segments, short behind-the-scenes videos, polls, and giveaways. This will create a stronger sense of connection and participation among students who desire more authentic and personal engagement with filmmakers and actors.

Second, collaboration with student influencers and campus-based film clubs should be encouraged. Many UNIBEN students are active content creators with considerable followings. By partnering with these influencers to promote upcoming films or film-related discussions, filmmakers can directly reach the student population in a more relatable and trusted way.

Third, Nollywood should invest in data-driven audience analysis. By tracking the type of film content students interact with most on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, filmmakers can tailor their promotional content and narratives to fit audience preferences. This data centric approach ensures that social media campaigns are both efficient and impactful.

Fourth, universities, particularly the University of Benin, should integrate film appreciation and media engagement into extracurricular programs. Departments of Theatre Arts and Mass Communication can host regular seminars or film screening events followed by online discussions, bridging academic learning with digital participation.

Fifth, governmental and private film bodies such as the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC) and the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) should provide grants or sponsorships for student-led digital film campaigns. This will not only promote Nollywood films but also inspire students to contribute creatively to the industry's online visibility.

Finally, filmmakers must maintain consistency and authenticity in their online presence. Students are drawn to relatable and genuine personalities. When Nollywood actors and directors share their creative processes, challenges, and experiences, they humanize the industry and make it more appealing to the younger audience.

Effective use of social media is no longer optional but essential for Nollywood's continued growth. Engaging students through inclusive, creative, and interactive digital practices will not only strengthen audience participation but also build a loyal and dynamic generation of Nigerian film enthusiasts.

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APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A: Demographic Information

(Please tick ✓ where appropriate)

1. Gender:

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

2. Age:

Below 18 years

18–25 years

26–35 years

36 years and above

3. Level of Study:

100 Level

200 Level

300 Level

400 Level

500 Level

4. Faculty: _____

5. Social media platforms you use most for film content (tick all that apply):

Facebook

Instagram

TikTok

Twitter (X)

YouTube

WhatsApp

Section B: Social Media and Film Audience Engagement (UNIBEN Context)

Instruction: Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement using the scale below:

SA = Strongly Agree

A = Agree

N = Neutral

D = Disagree

SD = Strongly Disagree

Filmmakers' Use of Social Media

6. Nigerian filmmakers and production companies use social media to promote their films.

Yes ()

No ()

Rarly ()

7. Nollywood films reach UNIBEN students more effectively through social media than through TV, radio, or posters.

Yes ()

No ()

Rarly ()

8. Social media campaigns (trailers, posters, influencer promotions) make me more aware of Nollywood films.

Yes ()

No ()

Rarly ()

Audience Interaction with Content

9. I frequently like, share, or comment on film-related posts I see on social media.

Yes ()

No ()

Rarly ()

10. I usually watch trailers and teasers on social media before deciding whether to watch a film.

Yes ()

No ()

Rarly ()

11. Social media keeps me more connected to Nollywood actors, producers, and film updates.

Yes ()

No ()

Rarly ()

Awareness of Social Media Strategies

12. Social media promotions raise awareness of films among UNIBEN students more than traditional adverts.

Yes ()

No ()

Rarly ()

13. Online reviews, comments, and memes by other students influence my decision to watch a film.

Yes ()

No ()

Rarly ()

14. I am more likely to trust film promotions shared by celebrities, influencers, or fellow students.

Yes ()

No ()

Rarly ()

Increasing Audience Participation

15. Social media encourages me to take part in Nollywood-related discussions.

Yes ()

No ()

Rarly ()

16. I am more likely to buy tickets or stream a film after engaging with promotions online.

Yes ()

No ()

Rarly ()

17. Being part of online student groups (WhatsApp, fan pages, Twitter Spaces) increases my interest in Nollywood films.

Yes ()

No ()

Rarly ()

18. In your opinion, how do Nollywood filmmakers best use social media to reach students of the University of Benin?

19. How do you personally interact with Nollywood film content on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube?

20. What more can be done to improve audience engagement with Nollywood films among UNIBEN students through social media?

21. Suggest one way to encourage more student participation in film-related discussions on social media.