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Uses and Gratifications of Home Videos among the Nigerian Teenage Audience: Implications for Cultural Development and Sustainability   *(Pp. 275-290)*

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Abstract

The fall out of the introduction of the video cassette recorder (VCR) in the mid-1970s has been the proliferation of home video films. And the dominant audience of this unique medium today is found among children and teenagers, which have employed it for various purposes. This work studies the gratifications sought by teenagers in Enugu-North Local Government Area of Enugu State in the home video films they watch. Using the survey research design and a population of 200 this work found that the preponderant of the population use home video for diversion and relaxation, while a sizable number use it to ease tension. The content and duration of watching put in this past time are different ball games. As much as 42 percent of those polled spend 3 -5 hours a day watching films. Their dominant genres are love, comedy, sex and children films. The implication of all this for cultural development and sustainability is that our youths have become captive audiences to immorality and alien culture. The researcher recommends a stricter regulation of this medium as well as training of continuous practitioners of the industry.

Keywords: *Uses and gratifications, socio-psychological needs, home video, teenagers, dominant genre.*

Introduction

One of the crucial new communication technologies that facilitated the convergence of the media is the videocassette recorder (VCR). In

combination with cable, also known as the Master Antenna Television (MATV), digital video recorders (DVD), satellite, the Internet, digitization and the remote control, the VCR had one of the fastest rate of adoption in history, only second to the television technology (Dominick, 2009). As Baran (2005: 251) suggests, these new technologies have upset the long-standing relationship between the media and the audience, while convergence is also reshaping that relationship.

Introduced in 1976, the VCR is a piece of equipment used to record and play back video signals from an antenna, a coaxial cable, another VCR or a video camera. The device contains two rotating spools that allowed a standard length of magnetic plastic tape to be played, recorded on, stopped, fast forwarded or rewound, much like the audiocassette (Microsoft Encarta, 2009). At its introduction, video technology was viewed as a revolutionary approach to television newsgathering. Initially called the Electronic newsgathering (ENG) it provided an instant process of video and audio production of news events that are ready for use in television news, devoid of the post production processing required by the celluloid news film of old. As Odukomaiya (2005) clarifies that materials on ENG are ready for screening without any expensive intermediate work.

It is the realization of the limitless potentials of the ENG equipment and its extension to the production of drama serials and feature length films that is known as the home video film in Nigeria today. For the movie industry, the home video equipment has created a huge, profitable market while a whole new audience, including many who had not been to a movie theatre in several years, are watching movies on VCRs. But the home video concept is only a technological improvement over the motion picture industry which history predates the VCR and ENG. This VCR format has graduated to the Video compact disk (VCD) and the digital video disk (DVD).

The Evolution of Movies
Film is an extension of the photographic technology. The development of photography was begun by the French inventor Joseph N. Niepce in 1816. Niepce was the first to record images using a camera and film. Since Niepce's images did not last, Louis Daguerre introduced the daguerreotype in 1839 to solve that need. Daguerreotype recorded images on polished metal plates that were washed with a cleaning solvent to reveal a positive image.

William H. Talbot, a Briton introduced the paper film, about the same year as the daguerreotype. Known as the calotype, it used a translucent paper which

is today known as the negative. Finally, Hannibal Goodwin invented the celluloid roll film, while George Eastman introduced the easy-to-use Kodak camera.

It was these inventions that the notable photographer, Eadweard Muybridge employed in 1877 to prove that a horse in full gallop had all four feet off the ground (Baran, 2005: 161). Muybridge subsequently invented the zoopraxiscope, a machine for projecting slides onto a distant surface.

The principle that enhanced the perfection of motion pictures however dates back to the second century A.D., when the Greek astronomer Ptolemy theorized that the human brain retains an image taken by the eye for 1/24 of a second after the image disappears. According to Wilson and Wilson (2001) and Baran (2005), the implication of this principle is that if separate frames of still pictures of similar or slightly different images are moved at 24 framed a second; an illusion of movement occurs to people watching them.

Building on efforts of scientists, inventors and entrepreneurs William Kennedy Dickson, working with Thomas Edison, invented the Kinetograph, a motion picture camera that took 40 photographs per second. This was in the year 1888. The Kinetograph was a combination of Hannibal Goodwin's Celluloid roll film, and George Eastman's Kodak camera which was easy to use. Dickson also developed a motion picture projection box which Edison called the Kinetoscope. Wilson and Wilson described the Kinetoscope as a four-foot box that one person at a time could peer into to see series of still photos move across a light source. At this point, the motion picture was not projected as is the case today.

The first motion picture studio was built by Edison in New Jersey, United States, and was named *Black Maria*. While one of he first films made by Edison's company and exposed therein was Annabelle, a 30-second strip. In 1895, the Lumiere Brother's, Auguste and Louis – from Lyon France, patented their cinematographe, a device with capacity both to photograph and project action on a screen. Subsequently, Baran (2005:164) records:

> (Thomas) Edison recognized the advantage of the
> cinematographe over his kinetoscope so he acquired
> the patent of an advanced projector developed by
> U.S. inventor Thomas Armat. On April 23, 1896 the
> Edison Vitascope premiered in the New York City….

It is significant to note that films up to this period were shot in fixed frames, the camera did not move, and there was no reality. But the Frenchman George Melies, called the first artist of the cinema introduced narration to film with this *A Trip to the Moon* in 1902. Melies was also held to have introduced special effects on film with this single innovation. By 1903, the American Edwin S. Potter released his *The Great Train Robbery.* Potter who is held to be the father of American film was acclaimed by Wilson and Wilson (2001: 221) thus:

> … he developed new editing techniques to piece together different scenes to create a story line. The film (The Great Train Robbery) filled with gunfights, chases, and other actions as a band of desperadoes robs a westbound train, was only 12 minutes long, but it set standards for drama and excitement that would become basic to… films for years to come.

Mention should also be made of D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) for the many technical innovations as well as controversies it generated for its bigotry in is portray of blacks. With the entrance of narratives and artistry into movies also crept in the contest to entertain and titillate, which expectedly resorted to the basest and beastly aspect of man – sex and crime. This was the birth of new genres that, beyond the documentaries, held the audience captive, an attribute of the theatre.

The Development of Film in Nigeria
Like other modern media forms, the motion picture industry owes its beginning in Nigeria to our colonial history. As Owens-Ibie, and Mgbejume (cited in Okunna, 1994) recorded, the first moving pictures was screened at Glover Hall, Lagos for about ten nights from 12 August, 1903. The film was screen by Messrs Balboa of Barcelona, Spain, who had a Nigerian, Herbert Macaulay as its manager. For Mgbejume, that was seven years after the birth of the cinema.

Further development of the medium came in the form of colonial government film unit set up as part of the information department. Though *Balogun* (1987) records that one Mr. Obe was making films for the health department between 1936 and 1940, much of the development of film production can be attributed to the film unit created in 1947. Much of the efforts of the unit was on the distribution of propaganda movies on the triumph of the Allied forces in the World War II, and the production of documentaries and newsreels such

as *Empire Day Celebrations in Nigeria* (1948), *Small Pox Leprosy* (1950), *Port Harcourt Municipal Council Elections* (1950) and *Queen Elizabeth II's Visit to Nigeria* (1956).

The contributions of the Yoruba traveling theatre such as Ade Afolayan and his Friendship Motion Pictures, Hubert Ogunde's Ogunde Pictures Company, and Moses Adejumo's Alawada Film Company are of significant note. The reason is because these set of producers began the idea of shooting their movies in video cassettes. For instance the notable Yoruba home video film *Aje Ni Lja Mi* produced by Kenneth Nnabue, for the late Sola Ogunshola, emanated from such experiment. By the time the same Nnabue came up with *Living in Bondage* (1992) and *Glamour Girls*, the fad has caught on (Atakpo, 2006).

The Uses and Gratifications Theory
The uses and gratification theory belongs to the realm of the active audience theories, those theories Baran and Davis (1995) described as rather focusing on assessing "what people do with media" than attempting to understand what the media do to people. The theory emphasizes the audience member's motive for consuming specific media or their content, as well as the consequences of such choices. Williamson (2010) suggests that "audiences deploy both aesthetic and ritual approaches to choosing which new movies to watch, knowledge of which may assist both the filmmaker in the manufacture or marketing of new products and the student in filmmaking school to understand how genre works."

The uses and gratifications approach originated from the works of scholars such as Herta Herzog, Paul Lazarfeld and Frank Stanton in the 1940s. The work, *Radio Research 1941*, which appeared in 1942 and was published by Lazarsfeld and Stanton, paid significant attention to how varied audiences used the media to organize their lives. One of such studies focused on the uses made by farmers of early morning radio reports made to farmers. As part of the series, Bernard Berelson in 1948 published the widely acclaimed study of the social disruption occasioned by a newspaper strike and reported convincing evidence that newspapers formed important part of many people's daily routine (Baran and Davis, 1995:212).

Prior to Berelson's study of the newspaper strike, Herzog (1944) had released her article on the "motivations and gratifications of daily serial listeners", which studied listeners of radio soap-opera and identified three major types

of gratifications derived by those fans. They are: (a) A means of emotional release, (b) Opportunities for wishful thinking, (c) A source of advice.

Going farther in time, one of the largest research projects ever undertaken in an effort to understand the relationship between a medium and a particular audience, had the motion picture as its subject. Known as the Payne Fund Studies, Lowery and De Fleur (1988: 34) reports that the project investigated "several kinds of major effects" such as acquisition of information, change in attitudes, stimulation of emotions, harm to health, erosion of moral standards, and influence on conduct.

On the acquisition of information, Payne Fund investigations concluded that movies provides a special learning format that lead to unusually high retention of factual material, in comparison to the acquisition of facts in standard laboratory memory experiments. On attitude change, Ruth Peterson and L.L. Turnstone (cited in lowery and De fleur, 1988) found that movies influence changes of attitude. The adolescent movies fan imitated movies stars in the area of beautification, personal mannerisms, and social techniques on daily bases. The female copied the style of dress and hair arrangement of actresses, while teenage males in addition to dressing like their stars, also copied sophisticated mannerisms. Also movie stars provided attractive sources of modeling for the adolescents, and finally they found movies with themes of crime, sex and love very fascinating.

As Lowery and De fleur (1988: 47) put it:

> In an era when there were only a limited number of sources from which young people could learn ways of relating to the opposite sex, and especially about techniques of kissing or the meaning of love and romance, the films provided fascinating lessons.

The movies were a rich source for adolescent daydreams and fantasies. They were used to stimulate imaginations about playing fantastic adult role in wealth, opulence and glamour. Finally, as Herbert Blumler (cited in Lowery and De Fleur) reports, movies were sources of "emotional possession" defined as a situation where an individual's emotions are aroused so strongly that (they) lose some measure of self-control, leading to manifest overt behaviour such as tears, screams, hiding, adulation, and grief or sorrow for the plight of a movie character.

By the 1960s and 1970 when the uses and gratifications approach was re-discovered and elaborated (McQuail. 2005:424), the basic assumptions have been specified as follows:

- ❖ Media and content choice is generally rational and directed towards certain specific goals and satisfactions – the audience is active and audience formation can be logically explained

- ❖ Audiences members are conscious of the media-related needs which arise in personal (individual) and social (shared) circumstances and can voice these in terms of motivations

- ❖ Broadly speaking, personal utility is a more significant determinant of audience formation than aesthetic or cultural factors.

- ❖ All or most of the relevant factors for audience formation (motives, perceived or obtained satisfactions, media choices, background variables) can, in principles be measures.

In reviewing the current status of uses and gratification, J.G. Blumler (cited in McQuail, 2005), distinguished between "social origins" and ongoing experiences and concluded that media use is an outcome of forces in society, of individual predispositions, and of the prevailing circumstances. The increasing amount of media use can therefore only be explained by referring to what the author called "media side factors", especially specific content and public.

On the relationship between expectation brought to media by the audience and the rewards, McQuail, using the expectancy- value theory explains that "rewards can be derived from media use (e.g. "having a good read") or from certain favorite genres (eg detective stories) or actual items of content (a particular film), and they provide guidance (or feedback) for subsequent choices adding to the stock of media- relevant information" In general terms, rewards are "experienced psychological effects which are valued by individuals". The author therefore provides twelve elements identifiable in the expectancy –value model of media gratifications. The elements are: information and education, guidance and advice, diversion and relaxation social contact, value reinforcement, cultural satisfaction, emotional release, identity formation and confirmation, lifestyle expression, security, sexual arousal, and filling time.

Akpan (2005) made a comparative analysis of the uses and gratifications of GSM and landline telephones among the students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. He found that the students preferred GSM to landlines because it is easy to acquire, less expensive, portable and offers more privacy. In addition, maintenance of GSM phone lines removes the bottlenecks associated with landlines. In conclusion, the researcher confirms the position of Eishmey and McCord (quoted in Akpan, 2005) that "there is a match between the gratifications we seek and those we actually receive from the media".

The Problem
The home video industry also known as Nollywood is perhaps at the height of its boom in Nigeria. This is evidenced by the proliferation of rental clubs and sales outlets, increased output which is held to be at least 20 per month and improvement in the quality of life of star actors and actresses, producers and others in the ancillary services.

And like books, the film or motion pictures holds a very special place in the culture of any society including. Apart from serving as an entertainment medium, providing diversion from the daily routines of life and the stress thereof, the movies also aims to educate, and possibly mobilize people towards the achievement of stated national goals, among others (Akpan, 2002).

As in other countries of the world, the audience of movies is increasingly teens and young adults who employ the medium for numerous gratifications. Teen's exposure to the glitz and glamour, violence and eroticism in the Nigerian home videos has tended to mainstream them into erroneous belief and interpretation of the world around them. The question is: what do these teens seek from the movies and what do they obtain there from?

The Research Purpose and Questions
This study is focused on the audience of film. It studied the influence of the motion pictures on its audience, especially the teenage audience - between 13 and 19 years old. The crux of this study is to discourse the implications of the dominant genre consumed by this group on sustainable cultural development of Nigeria. However, this study on effect is from the perspective of the audience

The following questions will guide this study:

1. What are the socio-psychological needs of teenagers in Enugu North LGA which they bring to home video viewing?

2. How are the needs of the teens in Enugu North LGA gratified by the home video they watch?

Theoretical Base

This study firmly anchors on the uses and gratifications approach as already explained. However, the cultivation analysis model is also used to support the description of the trends observed and information elicited from the respondents polled for this study.

Developed by George Gerbner and his colleagues who worked in the US Surgeon General's scientific advisory committee on television and social behaviour in 1972, cultivation analysis was hinged on five assumptions.

According to Baran and Davis (1995) the assumptions are that:

1. Television is essentially and fundamentally different from other forms of mass media.

2. Television is the 'central cultural arm' of the society.

3. The substance of consciousness cultivated by television is not so much specific attitudes and opinions as more basic assumptions about the facts of life and standards of judgment on which conclusions are based. Simply put, the realities created by television are not based of real facts but on speculations.

4. Television's major cultural function is to stabilize social patterns, to cultivate resistance to change.

5. Television's contributions to observable, measurable, independent culture is relatively small.

In summary the central proposition of the theory is that television creates a world-view that is probably inaccurate; that world view becomes a reality because people believe it to be a reality and base their judgment of their world on that reality. What could be further from the truth for the Nigerian teenager fans of *Nollywood*. Akpabio (2007) had acknowledged that even those above the impressionable age are not totally immune to the appeal to sex, violence and appeal to the lowest common denominator, as well as media's ability to turn us into one dimensional being.

The Method

In the attempt to establish the purpose to which teenagers employ home video films and the satisfaction they derive there from, this study employed the survey method. The target population is teenagers (age bracket of 13-19 years) in Enugu-North Local Government of Enugu state.

Enugu-North as a cosmopolitan area, In fact, it is the seat of the state government. It has seven major wards (not electoral) which include: Coal camp/Ogbete, Asata, Ogui, Ogui New Layout, Government Reservation Area (GRA), New Haven, and Independence Layout. A total of 200 samples were selected purposively at the rate of 30 per ward except for GRA which yielded 20 samples. The reason is because GRA is not as thickly populated as the other six wards.

In distributing the questionnaires, care was taken to ensure that it was not during school hours and when possible during weekends and breaks or holidays. Data gathered for this study were analyzed using simple statistical tables.

Findings

Demographic data from the returned questionnaires shows that 83 (16%) of respondents were males, while 53 (38%) were females leaving a margin of error of one per cent. Also, 64 (47%) were in the age bracket of 13 -15 years, while 72 (52%) were between 16 and 19 years. On their occupations, 75 (55%) were students, 34 (25%) were applicants/ apprentices and 27 (19%) were civil servants. On their level of education, 50 (36%) are in senior secondary school, 38 (27%) are in junior secondary school, while 26 (19%) possess the first school learning certificate. Twenty-two (16%) are undergraduates of tertiary institutions.

Table one shows that an overwhelming 91 percent of teens in Enugu-North LGA watch home video films; while Table two indicates that a majority admitted they spend between three to five hours every day watching the pictures. On the genre of movies watched by the sample many (18%) declared they preferred comedy. However, while 19% preferred love movies, 19% indicated their preference for romance (sex). What these indicate is that 30% of the respondents prefer pictures with themes of romance and sex.

On the gratifications sought, a preponderance of sample (20%) use movie viewership for diversionary and relaxation purposes. Conversely, only 11% of those polled gave information and education as the psycho-social needs

they brought to movie viewership; an even lower number (7%) attend to movies for the purpose of guidance and advice.

Discussion of Findings
Observers on the relationship between film and culture continue to raise questions as to whether the medium is increasingly denominated by the wants, tastes and needs of what amounts to an audience of children and teenagers, especially in the face of obvious fixation on kids and teens by Hollywood and our own *Nollywood* – "the world of make believe" (Cf. Baran, 2005). This concern is not misplaced since these teens are show the preponderance and predilections to violence, sexual immorality, gangsterism in the form of secret cults, armed robbery, and sex related offences, etc. in the society today. All this are traceable to what they watch as well as the pictures built on their heads – a manifestation of the world-view depicted by the movies.

It needs to be acknowledged that the home video has fostered closer family ties as families are entertained (Atakpo, 2006). However what type of pictures do the teens watch behind the parents and how do they interpret the roles of their favorite actor sand actresses. Obviously, the increase in indecent dressing, rape, violence and other vices might indicate that the teens misread the moral lessons contained in the movies they watch; talk of latent dysfunctions of the film medium.

It is well known assumption in cinematography that familiarity with generic characteristics repeatedly attracts viewers to a particular genre. This prior knowledge of the genre is necessary in order to follow a plot (Williamson, 2010). Artistes like Ramsey Noah, Emeka Ike, Ini Edo, Omotola Jalade-Ekinde, Eucharia Anunobi-Ekwu, Jim Iyke etc, seem to be their favourites of teen viewers in Enugu North LGA and they display evidences of familiarity specific pictures and several roles they played and continue to play in Romance pictures.

Implications for Cultural Development and Sustainability
What are the consequences the gratifications derived by Nigerian teenagers from the genre of home video films they watch particularly on the nation's cultural base – the generational accumulation expressed in the form of tools, knowledge and techniques available to a society and upon which such society builds and sustain its structure? What implications does the exposure pattern hold for the nation's sustainable development? These questions follow in view of Nurse (2007), suggestion that the cultural Sustainable development

entails development that can be kept going or maintained where in proper attention is paid to the transformation of productive forces and commensurate transformation in the social relations of production (Anger, (2010). It is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987).

Iheme (2000) posits that "the sustainability concept recognizes that life is a complex bundle of values, objectives and activities, with ethical, environmental, economic and social dimensions. While current concern about unsustainability largely has an ecological basis, it is clear that human situations can be unsustainable for social and economic reasons as well". Nigerian youths have become captive audiences of cultural mainstreaming occasioned by the forces of globalization and neo-colonialism, rather than participants in the communication sharing, in an unequal exchange. Find the outcomes in the modes of dressing, in the ascendancy of immorality, in the food consumption patterns and in the new health challenges spreading across borders.

Nigeria is currently in pursuit of the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as adopted by the 189-member countries of the UN in September, 2000 in their New York summit. The eight MDGs aim to reduce the number of people who live on less than one dollar a day by 2015. They are as follows: Goal 1: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, Goal 2: achieve universal primary education, Goal 3: promote equality and empower women, Goal 4: reduce child mortality, Goal 5: improve maternal health, Goal 6: combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, Goal 7: ensure environmental sustainability, and Goal 8: develop a global partnership for development. To domesticate the MDGs framework, the Federal Government drew up the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), while the states and local governments fashioned out the SEEDS and LEEDS to reflect the MDGs at their various levels.

Sustainable development of Nigeria has to be prosecuted at the three ramifications – the environment (ecology), socio-economic, and human capital – particularly at the human capital altitude. Article 13 of the UNESCO convention on the protection and promotion of diversity of cultural expressions in providing for integration of culture in sustainable development prescribes that parties to the convention shall endeavour to integrate culture in their development policies at all levels for the creation of conditions

conducive to sustainable development and, within this framework, foster aspects relating to the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions. When this is extrapolated to the our cultural development, the diverse culture of the Nigerian society needs to be protected from externalities and invasion, promoted and maintained as prerequisites to sustainable development for the benefit of the present and future generations. The wider implications of the dominant genre of movies consumed by the home video teenage audience in Nigeria do not encourage this extrapolation.

Conclusion

The motion picture industry is thriving in Nigeria today, owing to the spacious acceptance of video technology that has advanced to digital video recorder (DVR). However, the medium, a dominant channel of children and teenagers, has as much nuisance as it continues to offer more options for sustainable development. The banes are located in the themes which pervades most productions: sex, crime, rituals and violence. Not to be overlooked is the widespread use of cable and satellite channels such as *African Magic* and *Magicworld* in the diffusion of this dominant movie genre. What this burgeoning industry needs is professionalization to streamline the integration of this communication toolbox and its dominant audience into the sustainable development efforts of the Nigerian society, particularly the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). All this could be achieved by training and active regulation of the industry. With positive disposition of such regulators as the Nigerian Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) and the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and other stakeholders in the industry, the pictures can be made safer for this susceptible group of the Nigerian society.

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Table 1: Fans of Home Video Films

Code	Response	Frequency	Percentage
a.	No	11	8
b.	Yes	125	91
	Total	**136**	**99**

*1% was lost in estimation.

Table 2: Length of Time Spent Watching Home Video Films.

Code	Response	Frequency	Percentage
a.	More than 5 hours daily	22	16
b.	3-5 hours daily	58	42
c.	1-2 hours daily	30	22
d.	On weekends only	26	19
	Total	**136**	**99**

**1%was lost in estimation

Table 3: Favourite genre of film

Code	Response	F	%
b.	Romance (sex)	15	11
c.	Love	27	19
d.	Mystery	15	11
e.	War	08	5
f.	Children	20	14
g.	History	06	4
h.	Travels	5	3
i.	Comedy	25	18
j.	Social commentary	05	5
	Total	**136**	**97**

Table 4: Reason for Watching Home Video

Code	Response	F	%
a.	They are informative and educative	15	11
b.	They provide guidance and advice	10	07
c.	They are for diversion and relaxation	20	20
d.	They help keep contact with friends and family	04	02
e.	They help to reinforce my value and belief	05	04
f.	They reflect our culture	05	04
g.	They help to ease tension	20	14
h.	I like to identify with some people	04	02
i.	They show the latest fashion and lifestyle	18	13
j.	They teach how to secure and defend yourself	03	02
k.	I like romantic scenes in films	08	05
l.	They are simply to fill time.	14	10
	Total	**136**	**96**