

Projecting Municipal Theme to Nollywood

Adjeketa Blessing¹

¹Department of Creative Arts, Dennis Osadebay University, Delta State Nigeria

*Correspondence: blessing.adjeketa@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the issue of municipal disposal, management, and its effect on Nigerians, and proposes municipal as a theme to Nollywood. The issue of improper solid waste (municipal) disposal and management and its effect on humans and the environment has been a subject of scholarly discussion for a very long time and in world the cinema. In Nigeria, the electronic media especially news bulletins present issues of improper waste disposal and its impact on community dwellers. However, there is yet a full-length feature film in Nigeria that deals primarily with the issue of municipals. Nollywood has over the years treated themes of varied identities such as prostitution, banditry, politics, and communal insecurity. However, it is pertinent to note that the most prominent studies on Nollywood films are on national identity and culture(s). There are nonetheless few studies on the culture of environmentalism or ecocriticism and health and illnesses in Nigerian films. The need for Filmmakers (practitioners) and scholars to do further studies into the field of solid waste identity (municipal) is indeed necessary. Therefore, in this paper, I reviewed materials on municipals, and films that treated issues revolving around municipals (garbage, rubbish, discards, junk) and their implications on humans and the environment in some films.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Published June 4th 2023



KEYWORDS

Environment; Health and well-being; Municipal Disposal; Nollywood Film

ARTICLE LICENCE

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1. Introduction

The issue of improper solid waste disposal and management system in cities of developing countries is a serious one. It is a national identity that Nollywood needs to pay undivided attention to. Although present in local villages, solid waste pollution especially from households is a dilemma facing urban cities. As the population increases, the rate of consumption of properties increases, and the rate of solid waste consumed and disposed of also increases. In popular cities, hazardous wastes are being generated every day. During the covid-19 lockdown period for example plenty of waste was generated in Nigerian cities. And, like in other cities around the world, much waste was generated from the medical emergency units of hospitals as well as from general households (Makoto, 2020). Cases of littering and dumping wastes illegally and or burning them were also on the high side. And there was no proper recycling of the massive waste generated at the time of the covid 19. The attitude displayed during the covid 19 pandemic in some major cities in Nigeria proved that many individuals in civil society in Nigeria disregard the importance of proper waste management until a crisis resulting from waste erupts. Also, the government of Nigeria cultivated a lackadaisical attitude to waste management, the same attitude individuals in the cities showed. Everyone waited until the very late hours before introducing initiatives of prevention which are of course inadequate. The government of Nigeria forgets that it lacks the “capacity in terms of financial, technical, social, and institutional aspects to handle disease outbreak caused by the specks of dirt (Makoto 2020)”. How is the identity of solid waste presented in global films? How is it portrayed in Nollywood? What can Nollywood do to minimize waste production in Nigeria? What proper ways should Nollywood present solid waste and disposal? Like other fields of studies, there have been several identity discourses in Nollywood films ranging from disability, to religious and cultural. There are also several studies on Nigerian cinema and ecocriticism. However, there are few numbers of films if any, whose themes focus on improper waste disposal, management, and the effect on the Nigerian populace. Although The is the presence of municipals on the streets of major cities in Nigeria shown in some Nollywood films, there is yet a full-feature film treating the issue of municipal. I, therefore, project the theme of municipal, to filmmakers in Nigeria in this paper.

2. The Film of Various Regions and Societal Reflection

The spectrums through which the constituents of a film are examined are plenty and are of varied dimensions. Films present social economic and cultural issues in the society that hosts them. With television, film, and the advent of information and communication technology (ICT), the world has become a global village where pressing issues are transmitted as they occur (Aswad et al., 2019; Junaidi et al., 2020). The electronic media, especially film has been a viable tool for the presentation and transition of such pressing issues like prostitution, banditry, politics, communal insecurity, and environmental degradation (Asba et al., 2019; Rahman, 2019). While some of these issues in the society presented in some films are incorrect, leading to factual arguments, however, the portrayals sometimes are the true identity of the host culture. Shoma A Chatterjin (ND) the Indian film scholar, journalist, and author says that the creation and the merging of different forms of media and new information technologies have stirred the widespread and quick development of ideas and values at the local, national, and global levels in a degree and concentration never experienced in the past. This, therefore, means that with the global movement and cultural hybridity of today, the question of a truly personal, community, and nation's identity in the electronic media has become not only important but very essential (Andini, 2017; Sari et al., 2019).

Nollywood, Bollywood, and Hollywood are the most popular film industries in the world. The Nigerian movie industry Nollywood is the second-largest movie industry in the world in terms of quantity of production. Bollywood produced 1,091 feature-length films in the year 2006, Nigeria top second with 872 productions as the United States took third place with 485 major films" (Uchenna & Abosede, 2020). The focus of Nollywood films is not only to entertain and educate. The films also function not only as a cultural product aimed at engendering socio-cultural and economic development (Ayakoroma, 2021), but they present to the world the nation's physical environment. Film audience, especially Nollywood, looks beyond the stories presented, aimed at correcting negative cultural practices and promoting cultural values for recognition and imitation. They also look at the surrounding environment or location in which each of the stories is told. Even though from its early beginning, Nigerian film was a major part of the society through which people become aware not only of their culture but that of others (Tirumala, 2009), the presentation of the physical environment in some of the films is something to be ashamed of as a nation.

Nigerians have used films to tell stories about different aspects of Nigerian society. The films portrayed the people's cultural conditions and the challenges they face in their daily lives. One excellent thing about the Nigerian film is that it has universal appeal and impacts the economic, social, cultural, and religious morals of its audience. These impacts are either direct or indirect on the audience's minds and emotions. Like other film industries around the world, Nigerian film narratives serve to preserve and maintain their identities. This makes it not only of serious concern but also a challenge, especially for filmmakers. One pertinent question that needs to be answered is: Do Nigerian films promote the nation's environmental identity in its true form?

Bollywood presentation is critically not far off from that portrayed in Hollywood. However, its portrayal is on promoting the cultural identity of the host community using songs, dance, and costumes. These elements of the presentation are now very important features of Bollywood films. Hardly, any Bollywood film was shown on TV and satellite stations in Nigeria that does not combine these elements. The filmmakers have also succeeded in using these elements to add value to, create respect for, and make Indian culture a priority. The combination of these elements in popular Bollywood films has increased the popularity of the film in different parts of the world, especially in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Russia. One beautiful thing about the combined use of these elements by Bollywood filmmakers is that they have been used to correct certain preconceived and fixed notions about India as a nation.

Every film reflects the social, political, economic, cultural, philosophical, technological, and artistic developments of the country in which it is produced. Regarding Hollywood films for example and their role in the promotion of the American culture and its identity, Ayakoroma (2001) writes that the American dream is projected in their films in such a way that America is seen as the ideal country regardless of the sovereignty or integrity of other countries. More also, most Hollywood war/action films portray America as a dedicated country, whose citizens are ready to sacrifice everything to save just one of its folks (Ayakoroma, 2001). Most Hollywood films are therefore produced and function not only for entertainment or cultural preservation and propagation of the West but for the universal good of the society that hosts it. American films present not only the best of its cultures but the serene environment of the nation to the world. It is this presentation of serenity coupled with its rapid development presented in films and other electronic media outlets that makes some of the youths in developing nations see America as the best place to live. In extension, some filmmakers in Nigeria have created characters in their films who work hard and spend so much money to get a visa that could take them away from the crude environment to the beautiful surroundings portrayed in Hollywood. This testifies that whether

conscious or not, a nation is awarded certain privileges and or disadvantages because of the way the electronic media presents its environmental identity to the rest of the world.

a. Effect of Solid Waste on Developing Nations

The death rate especially in developing countries is tolling by the day. While the causes of some of these deaths are known and portrayed in films and television, many are unknown. In the democratic republic of Congo in 1976, near the Ebola River, a deadly disease was first discovered. Since that time, many people especially in Africa have been affected. It is believed that the virus came from animals such as bats or other nonhuman primates. Humans who have come in contact with the infected animal have also contracted the virus. Also, starting from December 2019 in Wuhan China, people were diagnosed with the Corona Virus disease that later spread to all countries of the world. The virus which many believed to have also come from bats or pangolins has killed millions and many are still dying of the disease (Sukmawaty et al., 2022). To reduce the transmission and spread of diseases, among other practices, cleanliness is recommended and broadcasted in the media for the people's awareness. In Nigeria for example such media product was plenty, especially at the time the coronavirus was still spreading. The Nigerian government used the media to inform the public on the best practice to keep safe in the country, as the possibility of the disease spreading was very high. Solid waste in residential homes, by the side of popular streets and roads, became very high. And the risk of contracting other diseases from those solid waste also became a concern. To reduce the essses of solid waste in the neighborhood and popular streets, individuals sometimes engage in waste burning. Many among these individuals who burnt solid wastes do not know it was a crude and hazardous way of waste disposal and management Realistically, many who engaged in this practice are unaware that "dumping and burning waste is not acceptable practice from environment and health perspective. And that viruses, once contacted by the human community, do not just disappear in a matter of hours or days. The tendency for it to remain with the human community almost for a lifetime is very high. Hence the need for media sensitization. Chadar & Keerti, (2017) paper on Solid Waste Pollution: A Hazard to Environment, listed some health hazards of improper disposal and management of solid waste to include:

1. Vectors like rats and insects invade refuse dumps and spread various diseases.
2. During the handling and transfer of hospital and clinic wastes, disease transmission may take place.
3. Water and food contamination through flies causes various diseases in humans as dysentery, diarrhea, and amoebic dysentery.
4. Rats dwelling with infectious solid wastes may spread diseases like plague, salmonellosis, trichinosis, endemic typhus, etc.
5. Water supply, if gets contaminated with pathogens present in solid wastes, may result in cholera, jaundice, hepatitis, gastroenteric diseases, etc.
6. Choking of drains and gully pits by the solid wastes, results in water logging which facilitates the breeding of mosquitoes and results in the spread of diseases like malaria and plague.

Vergara and Tchobanoglous (2012) further enumerated the effect of poor waste disposal and management on the environment and its inhabitants. According to them, the open dumping of wastes contaminates nearby water bodies with organic and inorganic pollutants. It also threatens public health by attracting disease vectors and exposing people living near the waste to the harmful products within. The incineration of waste emits a variety of pollutants, including dioxins and furans (Wiedinmyer et al., 2014). Therefore, an effort to sensitize the public on proper waste management becomes necessary especially now in developing countries like Nigeria because improper solid waste disposal and management is a practice and many are unaware that it is an unclean act that can cause the serious medical condition to them and their neighbors, hence, the people need a formal education on management of wastes. Improper solid waste disposal has been identified to affect public health in Nigeria because animals like rats and other vectors are many, living with humans uninvited in their homes. The vectors, in one way or the other, interact with humans who in turn may contract viruses from them. the need for sensitization is further emphasized by Makoto (2020), that besides creating additional challenges in waste management in developing countries, inadequate and inappropriate handling of waste may have serious public health consequences and a significant impact on the environment; it can have a severe negative effect on cities and their economies and as well has deep consequences on daily lives when not properly handled. Therefore, the effort to sensitize the public has led to the creation of not only media products like short advertisements geared toward informing the public on the consequences of failing to adhere to the rudiments of cleanliness but in the making of documentaries and some full-length feature films.

3. Result and Discussion

a. The Portrayal of Municipal in Films

Some films and documentaries exist whose themes are on waste management and the effect on biotic and a-biotic creatures. Some of these films include *Trashed*, *Wall-E* (animation film), *The Clean Bin Project*, and *A Plastic Ocean*. The animated film, *Wall-E*, deals with the bad condition of the earth's environment. The central theme is the consequence of years of environmental degradation and thoughtless consumerism by the earth's inhabitants. It features a robotic animated character whose work is to clean the earth of garbage and waste. Because of bad waste management, the earth is no longer inhabitable. Humans then abandoned the earth for hundreds of years because the Earth is overrun with garbage and devoid of plant and animal life. Humans then relocated to space for several hundreds of years while *Wall-e* works tirelessly to clean up the earth for it to be inhabited again.



Figure 1. Hips of solid waste on the earth caused by thoughtless consumerism by earth inhabitants



Figure 2. he animated cartoon character Wall-E cleaning up the garbage that humans have abandoned on the earth

A Plastic Ocean is another documentary film that talks about the impact that plastic is having on our oceans and the marine animals that live there. Craig Leeson a journalist, Tanya Steeter, a diver, and a team of scientists investigate how human addiction to plastic is impacting the food chain and how that is affecting every one of us through new and developing human health problems. For four years, they explore the fragile state of our oceans, uncover alarming truths about plastic pollution, and reveal working solutions that can be put into immediate effect.



Figure 3. A clip from the film A Plastic Ocean. It shows refuse, especially plastics, thrown by the side of a river causing harm to sea creatures and humans

The 2010 film, *The Clean Bin Project* is also another film that answers a simple but complex question, is it possible to live completely waste-free? With the inclusion of interviews with artists, lecturers, and pollution experts, the film, *The Clean Bin Project* presents the serious topic of waste reduction with optimism, humor, and inspiration for individual action. It features couple Jenny Rustemeyer and Grant Baldwin who go head to head in a comedic battle to see who can swear off consumerism and produce the least amount of garbage in an entire year. This fun full film is an inspiring call to individual action that speaks to crowds of all ages.

Also, the 2012 film *Trashed*, focused on the worldwide impact of human waste and the contamination it breeds. The film takes its audience around the world to see how some beautiful places have been polluted by waste. It is a call to responsibility towards the waste each individual generates. It also presents the need to cut down on the wastes that individuals produce now and that which we might generate in the future.

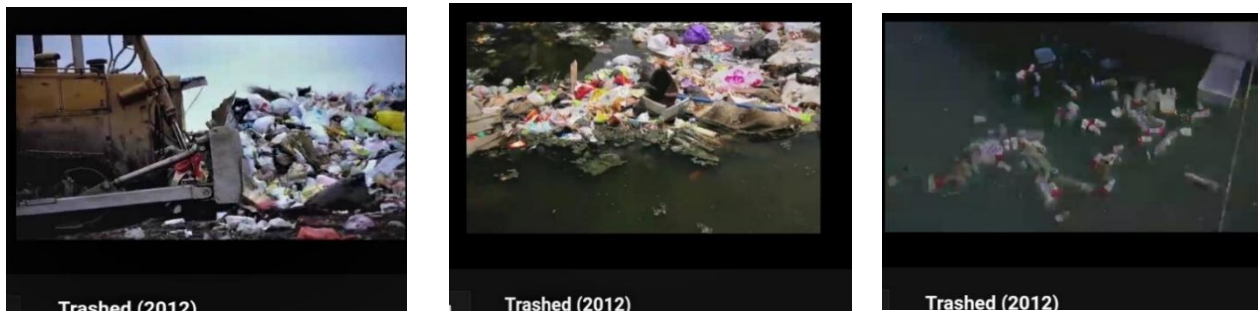


Figure 4, 5, and 6. Clips from the film *Trashed*. They showed how some beautiful places on earth and the waters have been polluted by waste

b. Projecting municipal theme to Nollywood

Reflecting the themes of the films *Wall-E*, *A Plastic Ocean*, *The Clean Bin Project*, and *Trashed*, is capable of influencing and shaping Nollywood filmmakers' opinions towards creating the severity of solid waste and the importance of proper management in Nollywood. There are several documentaries and news bulletins on Nigerian television stations on waste management and environmental degradation and the need for a clean environment. While these clips educate the television audience on proper waste management, little or no full-length feature film tackles the problem of municipals and its effect on the citizens. There are however hundreds of scenes in Nollywood films where hips of refuse are shown near residential areas without references to its effect on occupants of the earth



Figure 7. A scene from a Nollywood film, *Christ in Me*. The film shows a site of a hip of refuse dump located near a residential area in an urban city in Nigeria



Figure 8. A scene from the Nollywood film, *Moment of Madness*. This scene shows a hip of solid waste near a rural-urban residential area in Nigeria. A madwoman is seen scavenging in the refuse

These portrayals no doubt have become the identity of the Nigerian community to the rest of the world where Nigerian films are patronized. The popular view of the Nollywood audiences after watching several films showing the hips of waste near residential areas in popular cities is that waste is thrown at will without considering the impact on the environment and the people that live in it. There is no country, especially the developing ones that do not have the issue of solid waste disposal and management. While it is almost impossible to shift camera lenses from materials like solid wastes, there is a need for Nollywood filmmakers to focus portrayal on effect and management rather than the passive portrayal of the subject. The unavailability of films that treat the issue of solid waste and management in Nigeria has almost handicapped environmental film critics who wish to probe further into the subject of municipals, film, and the environmental humanities.

There are several angles from which Nollywood could present municipal. Engineering, health, environment, and anthropology fields, etc are some areas. Existing films reviewed above with municipal themes present the subject matter as resulting from the activities of humans on the soil and water. Wastes are presented either as solid or liquid and they are caused mainly by domestic, commercial, and industrial activities (Chadar & Keerti, 2017). Nollywood can also include in their presentation clinical and agricultural waste. In most foreign films that have municipal themes, the subject is presented as materials that are already used and unwanted. Because they no longer have importance to the possessor, they are thrown on the street and in the water (streams and rivers). Because they were not appropriately disposed of, soil, and water was portrayed as contaminated, causing harm to living things, both biotic and abiotic.

Vergara and Tchobanoglous (2012) in the work *Municipal Solid Waste and the Environment: A Global Perspective* presented several views on the concept of waste which Nollywood can create themes from. The book mentioned that what solid waste means to the engineer is different from what it means to the anthropologist, and the medics. For the engineer, solid wastes are materials that are discarded from residential and commercial sources. However, anthropologists look at solid waste from a cultural angle. For them, wastes are factual evidence of a culture. That is, "what people have owned and thrown away. The anthropologists believe that such items can speak more eloquently, informatively, and honestly, about the lives of a people over the years." In this case, the solid waste becomes the historical identity of the people who lived there. For the ecologist, there is no waste in nature. That municipals are only "a right thing in a wrong place". For those who work in clinics and hospitals, solid waste is used goss, platers, drug containers, pads, injection needles, and other used sharps that have been used on patients and are dangerous to others. Nollywood can present solid waste to fit and reflect any of these different thoughts and opinions. Its presentation could therefore be positive or negative. For example, while refuse workers in moving waste to a landfill could see waste as worthless, waste pickers who recover materials from refuse would treat it as valuable.

4. Conclusion

The paper concludes by suggesting that the discarding of solid waste should be a component, incorporated into the waste management plan of every nation and presented in the electronic media, especially in film. Nollywood filmmakers should emphasize in their films that proper solid waste disposal and management is a priority for every individual. Instead of passively showing rubbish, filmmakers should find a way to incorporate the effect of the waste seen on the screen on the people living in that vicinity. The Nollywood film audience should know that the only way a pollution-free and clean environment can be attained in Nigeria, start with themselves. Most importantly, the film medium should portray that proper management of waste generated from households should be prioritized. Infarct, proper waste disposal should be the first essential activity in the civic service that must be considered to minimize possible impacts on

health and the environment. Also, films, documentaries, and informative adverts should focus on good governance and policy-making responsibility as playing an important role in proper solid waste disposal and management. Such media products should portray that advanced preparedness and readiness by all will aid in quick response to proper management of solid wastes in times of crisis. I urge local electronic media outlets and short film and documentary producers to, through their art, make the government and related agencies know through their product that workable policies and implementation of waste management practices locally are attainable. Also, the films should portray the government seeking the assistance of the international community for new insight and knowledge on new and better ways of addressing the problem of improper waste disposal. Nollywood should take these examples discussed in this paper as a springboard to create films of municipalities and management procedures.

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