

GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED FILMS AS TOOLS FOR COUNTER-TERRORISM AWARENESS: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, SUSTAINABLE MEDIA STRATEGIES, AND SOCIAL CHANGE

ADARAMOLA OLUBUNMI EMMANUEL

Department of Performing Arts,
School of Humanities
Bamidele Olumilua University of Education,
Science and Technology (BOUESTI),
Ikere –Ekiti
greatolakunle1@gmail.com,

&

ADEOSUN OLABISI M.

Department of Performing Arts,
School of Humanities
Bamidele Olumilua University of Education,
Science and Technology (BOUESTI),
Ikere –Ekiti
adeosun.olabisi@bouesti.edu.ng
0009-0004-2006-9782

Abstract

Terrorism remains a persistent threat to national security, social cohesion, and sustainable development globally. Beyond its immediate physical consequences, terrorism can generate psychological trauma, economic instability, and political uncertainty, thereby undermining national development. This paper examines government-sponsored films as strategic communication tools for raising public awareness of terrorism, discouraging violent extremism, and promoting social responsibility. Using Black November as the principal case study, the paper investigates how cinematic narratives portray the socio-economic and political conditions associated with violent conflict and radicalisation while encouraging dialogue, civic participation, and peaceful conflict resolution. The study draws on Hypodermic Needle Theory and Agenda-Setting Theory to examine the potential influence of film on public perceptions and the salience of terrorism-related issues. Furthermore, the paper extends the discussion by examining the emerging role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a contemporary technological context for media production, distribution, audience engagement, and counter-terrorism communication. AI-driven technologies, including recommendation systems, sentiment analysis, misinformation detection, and predictive audience analytics, are increasingly transforming the ways governments and media institutions disseminate peace-oriented messages and counter extremist propaganda. The study also situates government-sponsored films within the framework of sustainable development by indicating their potential contributions to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). The paper argues that integrating AI-enabled communication strategies with government-sponsored films can enhance public awareness campaigns, strengthen media literacy, promote social resilience, and support sustainable peace building. It concludes that film

can serve as a valuable component of counter-terrorism communication when supported by responsible governance, ethical technological innovation, and strategic public communication, rather than as a standalone solution.

Keywords: Films, Public Awareness, Terrorism, Artificial Intelligence, Media Strategies, Social Change.

Introduction

The growing complexity of terrorism in the twenty-first century has increasingly driven governments, scholars, and media practitioners to explore innovative approaches to preventing violent extremism beyond conventional military and security responses (Schmid, 2013; United Nations Secretary-General, 2015). Terrorism has increasingly been understood as a multidimensional phenomenon with implications for political stability, economic development, human security, and international relations (Hoffman, 2017; Schmid, 2011; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2023). Consequently, preventive communication strategies have become increasingly important in addressing the ideological, social, and socioeconomic conditions associated with radicalization (Neumann, 2013; Schmid, 2013).

Among contemporary mass communication media, film remains an influential medium for shaping public perceptions because of its capacity to combine visual storytelling, emotional engagement, cultural representation, and persuasive communication (Green & Brock, 2000; Singhal & Rogers, 1999). Within this context, government-sponsored films can function as strategic communication tools for educating citizens, promoting national unity, countering misinformation, encouraging civic responsibility, and challenging extremist narratives (Nacos, 2016; Singhal & Rogers, 1999).

In Nigeria, the activities of insurgent and extremist organisations, militant movements, bandit groups, and other violent actors have highlighted the need for effective public enlightenment and strategic communication campaigns. These actors are not analytically equivalent: Boko Haram is widely characterised as an Islamist insurgency (Comolli, 2015); militancy in the Niger Delta has a distinct and historically varied trajectory rooted in grievances against the state and oil companies (Ukiwo, 2007; Watts, 2004); and banditry is more accurately understood as organised criminal violence connected to rural conflict dynamics (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016). While security operations remain indispensable, sustainable peace cannot be achieved through military responses alone. Long-term peace depends upon public education, social inclusion, good governance, media literacy, and constructive dialogue among citizens. Consequently, cinematic productions that portray the causes, consequences, and prevention of violent conflict and extremism provide an alternative framework for influencing public attitudes toward peacebuilding (Agina, 2018; UNDP, 2023).

The film *Black November* (Amata, 2012) serves as an appropriate case study because it examines the relationship between environmental injustice, political marginalization, corruption, economic exploitation, and violent resistance within the Niger Delta (Agina, 2013, 2018). Rather than merely presenting violence as criminal behavior, the film interrogates the structural inequalities and governance failures that contribute to violent conflict. Its narrative encourages audiences to reflect critically on the consequences of injustice while advocating dialogue, accountability, and social reform. It should be noted, however, that available production records identify *Black November* as a Nigerian–American co-production by Wells & Jeta Entertainment and do not document commissioning by the Nigerian government. The film is therefore analysed here as an exemplar of

the kind of peace-oriented cinematic narrative that government-sponsored communication initiatives could adopt or support, rather than as an instance of state sponsorship.

Recent developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) have further transformed the communication landscape (Martini, 2025; United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism [UNOCT], 2026). AI-powered recommendation systems, audience analytics, machine learning, natural language processing, and automated content moderation now influence how films are produced, distributed, consumed, and evaluated. These technologies offer governments and filmmakers opportunities to personalize awareness campaigns, identify priority audiences, combat online extremist propaganda, and evaluate the effectiveness of peace communication initiatives (UNOCT, 2026). At the same time, they raise significant ethical, human rights, and governance concerns (Floridi et al., 2018; Gorwa et al., 2020; Martini, 2025). Consequently, integrating AI into government-sponsored film campaigns represents an emerging frontier in counter-terrorism communication that requires careful safeguards.

Furthermore, the contribution of government-sponsored films extends beyond security concerns to broader sustainability objectives. By promoting peaceful coexistence, social inclusion, civic education, and responsible citizenship, such films may contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). These goals recognize that sustainable development cannot be achieved without peace, justice, inclusive institutions, and informed citizens (United Nations General Assembly, 2015).

This paper therefore investigates how government-sponsored films can function as instruments of counter-terrorism awareness while exploring how Artificial Intelligence and sustainable communication strategies can further enhance their effectiveness in promoting peace, national development, and long-term social transformation.

Literature Review

Conceptualizing Terrorism as a Social Crime

Terrorism remains one of the most debated concepts in political science, international relations, criminology, and media studies because of its complex ideological, religious, political, and socio-economic dimensions. Although definitions vary among scholars and international organisations, terrorism is generally understood as the deliberate use or threat of violence against civilians to instill fear, intimidate governments or societies, and advance political, ideological, or religious objectives (Hoffman, 2017; Schmid, 2011).

In Nigeria, the security landscape has evolved from isolated militant activities into a broader challenge involving insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, separatist agitations, and violent extremism, which should be analytically distinguished even where they overlap (Comolli, 2015; Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016; Ukiwo, 2007). Existing scholarship attributes the emergence of these conflicts to structural factors such as poverty, youth unemployment, corruption, political marginalization, environmental degradation, weak governance, and social inequality (Comolli, 2015; UNDP, 2023; Watts, 2004). Rather than viewing terrorism solely through a military lens, contemporary researchers and international organisations advocate multidimensional strategies that combine security interventions with education, public communication, social inclusion, and sustainable development (Schmid, 2013; United Nations Secretary-General, 2015).

This perspective aligns with the premise of the present study, which examines government-sponsored films as preventive communication tools capable of addressing the ideological and socio-economic roots of violent extremism.

Film as an Instrument of Public Awareness and Social Transformation

Film has long been recognised as a powerful form of mass communication because it combines visual imagery, narrative, sound, emotion, and symbolism in ways that can influence audience attitudes and behavior (Bandura, 2001; Green & Brock, 2000). Unlike many other communication channels, film possesses the capacity to entertain while simultaneously educating, informing, and encouraging audiences toward social action, an insight that underpins the entertainment-education tradition (Singhal & Rogers, 1999).

Within communication studies, scholars increasingly examine the potential of film and other entertainment narratives to contribute to behavioral change, civic engagement, and peacebuilding, while acknowledging that such effects depend on audience reception and on the wider communication strategies in which a film is embedded (Agina, 2018; Moyer-Gusé, 2008). Government-sponsored films particularly function as instruments of public enlightenment by communicating national policies, promoting civic values, strengthening national identity, and discouraging anti-social behaviours. Through carefully constructed narratives, these films seek to encourage audiences to reflect upon social problems and participate actively in national development.

In Nigeria, Nollywood has increasingly addressed issues such as terrorism, corruption, environmental degradation, gender-based violence, election violence, and social injustice (Agina, 2013; Haynes, 2016). Films such as *Black November*, *The Milkmaid*, *Voiceless*, and *Stolen Daughters: Kidnapped by Boko Haram* illustrate how cinematic storytelling can contribute to national conversations on security, justice, and peacebuilding.

Government-Sponsored Films and Counter-Terrorism Communication

Governments across the world increasingly recognize strategic communication as an essential component of counter-terrorism policy (Nacos, 2016; United Nations Secretary-General, 2015). Military operations alone cannot eliminate violent extremism without simultaneously addressing extremist narratives, misinformation, public distrust, and ideological radicalization (Schmid, 2013).

Government-sponsored films therefore represent an important aspect of strategic communication. Such productions educate citizens about the causes and consequences of terrorism, humanise victims of violence, encourage dialogue between communities and government institutions, and strengthen public resilience against extremist propaganda.

The effectiveness of these films depends not only on narrative quality but also on credibility, accessibility, cultural relevance, and audience engagement. Contemporary communication scholars argue that successful counter-terrorism messages should promote empathy, social cohesion, democratic participation, and constructive conflict resolution rather than relying exclusively on fear-based messaging (Moyer-Gusé, 2008; UNOCT, 2026).

Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Media Technologies in Public Awareness Campaigns

One of the most significant developments shaping contemporary communication is the rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI technologies are transforming many stages of media production, distribution, audience analysis, and content evaluation. Machine learning, natural language processing, predictive analytics, recommendation algorithms, and automated content moderation have become integral components of modern communication systems (Martini, 2025; United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute [UNICRI] & UNOCT, 2021).

Within counter-terrorism communication, AI provides governments and media organisations with innovative tools for identifying extremist narratives, monitoring online radicalization, analysing public sentiment, detecting misinformation, and evaluating the effectiveness of awareness campaigns (UNOCT, 2026). Streaming platforms increasingly rely on AI recommendation systems to personalize content delivery, ensuring that educational documentaries and peace-oriented films reach audiences most likely to benefit from them.

Generative AI also offers opportunities for script development, multilingual subtitling, accessibility enhancement, and digital restoration of educational films. However, scholars caution that AI must be governed ethically to minimise algorithmic bias, protect privacy, safeguard freedom of expression, and prevent the misuse of synthetic media for extremist propaganda (Floridi et al., 2018; Gorwa et al., 2020; Jobin et al., 2019; UNICRI & UNOCT, 2021). Consequently, AI should complement rather than replace human creativity, ethical oversight, and professional judgement in government-sponsored communication.

Sustainability, Peace building, and the Sustainable Development Goals

The concept of sustainability extends beyond environmental protection to include social justice, peaceful coexistence, inclusive governance, and resilient institutions. The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognises peace as a prerequisite for sustainable development and identifies education, justice, and strong institutions as essential pillars of human progress (United Nations General Assembly, 2015).

Government-sponsored films can contribute to sustainable development by promoting peaceful conflict resolution, civic education, social inclusion, environmental awareness, and responsible citizenship. Their educational function aligns particularly with SDG 4 (Quality Education), while their promotion of peaceful societies and accountable governance advances SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). Through narratives that discourage violence and encourage dialogue, these films may also support SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by fostering social cohesion and community resilience.

The integration of AI into these communication strategies can further support sustainability by enabling governments to reach diverse audiences efficiently, evaluate communication outcomes, and optimise resource allocation for public awareness campaigns. However, AI may both enable and inhibit progress toward the SDGs depending on how it is governed (Vinuesa et al., 2020). More broadly, recent human development analysis stresses that advancing shared development goals in an increasingly polarised world depends on renewed international cooperation (UNDP, 2024).

Empirical Review and Research Gap

Previous studies on terrorism in Nigeria have focused predominantly on military responses, political instability, insurgency financing, religious extremism, and the socio-economic drivers of violent conflict (Comolli, 2015; Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016; UNDP, 2023). Similarly, scholarship on Nollywood has largely examined issues of cultural identity, entertainment, political representation, and national image (Haynes, 2016). While a growing body of research explores media and counter-terrorism communication (Nacos, 2016) and the ethical implications of emerging technologies in counter-terrorism (Henschke et al., 2021; Martini, 2025), relatively few studies, to the best of our knowledge, investigate the intersection of government-sponsored films, Artificial Intelligence, sustainability, and strategic public awareness within the Nigerian context.

Furthermore, existing analyses of *Black November* concentrate primarily on environmental injustice, resource conflict, political corruption, and audience reception (Agina, 2013, 2018), without adequately considering how emerging AI technologies and digital media ecosystems can enhance the film's educational impact and dissemination. Notably, Agina (2018) found, through film screenings and focus group discussions that *Black November* cannot function in isolation to produce social change but must work within a broader framework of strategies serving the same goal, which underscores the relevance of the integrated communication approach explored in this paper. This paper addresses the identified gap by integrating film studies, media effects theory, AI-enabled communication, and sustainable development into a unified analytical framework for understanding government-sponsored films as instruments of counter-terrorism awareness.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Hypodermic Needle Theory and the Agenda-Setting Theory. These media theories provide a useful framework for examining how government-sponsored films may shape public perceptions of terrorism, influence attitudes towards national security, and promote behavioral change. In addition, this paper extends these classical perspectives by considering Artificial Intelligence (AI) and emerging digital communication technologies as a contemporary technological context within which media influence now operates, rather than as a separate theory.

Hypodermic Needle Theory

The Hypodermic Needle Theory, also known as the Magic Bullet Theory, emerged during the early twentieth century and argues that mass media messages are capable of exerting immediate, direct, and powerful effects on audiences. The theory assumes that audiences are relatively passive recipients who readily absorb media messages, which subsequently influence their beliefs, emotions, and behavior (McQuail, 2010). The theory has been widely criticised as an oversimplification, and historical analyses suggest that it was less a formally proposed theory than a label later applied to early assumptions about powerful media effects (Binham, 1988).

Although contemporary communication scholars recognize that audiences are more active and selective than originally proposed (Bandura, 2001; McQuail, 2010), the theory remains useful for examining the intended persuasive orientation of emotionally compelling media texts, particularly during periods of national crisis, insecurity, and social uncertainty. Government-sponsored films addressing terrorism may employ visual symbolism, emotional narratives, and patriotic messaging in an attempt to influence public understanding, discourage violent extremism, and encourage national unity.

Within the Nigerian context, *Black November* illustrates how film can represent systemic injustice, environmental degradation, corruption, and political marginalization while portraying the devastating consequences of violence. The emotional experiences of characters such as Ebiere are designed to invite audiences to empathize with victims while reflecting critically upon the structural conditions associated with conflict. Whether and how audiences actually respond in this way is an empirical question; reception research on the film suggests that its social-change potential depends on audience interpretation and on complementary strategies (Agina, 2018).

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence has further shaped the conditions under which media influence operates. AI-powered recommendation systems employed by streaming platforms, social media applications, and digital broadcasting services personalize content distribution according to users' viewing preferences and behavioral patterns. Consequently, counter-terrorism films sponsored by governments could potentially reach more precisely targeted audiences, although targeting people on the basis of inferred vulnerability to misinformation or extremist narratives raises serious privacy and ethical concerns (Floridi et al., 2018; Martini, 2025).

Furthermore, AI-driven audience analytics can help communication practitioners to estimate emotional responses, engagement levels, and message effectiveness in near real time. Rather than broadcasting identical messages to the general population, governments can develop more evidence-based communication strategies that seek to promote peacebuilding and civic responsibility (UNOCT, 2026).

Despite these technological advancements, ethical concerns remain significant. Algorithmic bias, digital surveillance, misinformation, and synthetic media generated through Artificial Intelligence present challenges that require responsible governance, transparency, and professional oversight (Jobin et al., 2019; UNICRI & UNOCT, 2021). Consequently, AI should function as a complementary tool that strengthens ethical communication rather than manipulating public opinion.

Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda-Setting Theory was developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), who argued that although the media may not determine what people think, they play an important role in shaping what people think about. Through repeated coverage, the emphasis of particular events, and the framing of public discourse, the media influence the salience of issues in the public mind and, by extension, societal priorities and public discussion (McCombs, 2014; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

Government-sponsored films can contribute to agenda-setting by directing public attention toward terrorism, insecurity, corruption, environmental injustice, and national development. Through carefully constructed narratives, these productions can encourage audiences to recognise terrorism as a multidimensional social problem rather than merely an isolated criminal act.

In *Black November*, attention is directed beyond acts of violence themselves to the underlying causes of conflict, including environmental exploitation, economic inequality, political corruption, poor governance, and violations of human rights. By foregrounding these issues, the film invites audiences to engage in broader discussions concerning justice, accountability, sustainable development, and peaceful conflict resolution.

The digital communication environment has reconfigured the agenda-setting function of media. Social networking platforms, online streaming services, mobile applications, and digital news ecosystems amplify the reach of government-sponsored films through rapid dissemination and interactive audience engagement.

Artificial Intelligence can further support agenda-setting analysis by identifying emerging public concerns through sentiment analysis, big data analytics, and predictive modeling. Governments and media organisations increasingly utilise AI technologies to monitor public conversations, evaluate communication effectiveness, detect misinformation, and refine strategic messaging. These innovations may enable counter-terrorism campaigns to remain timely, culturally relevant, and responsive to changing social realities (UNOCT, 2026).

However, scholars caution that algorithmic agenda-setting may unintentionally reinforce misinformation, political polarisation, or ideological bias if not carefully regulated (Gorwa et al., 2020; Martini, 2025). Ethical AI governance therefore becomes essential in ensuring that digital communication promotes democratic participation, social inclusion, and peaceful coexistence.

Integrating Media Theory, Artificial Intelligence, and Sustainable Development

Although the Hypodermic Needle Theory and Agenda-Setting Theory originated long before the digital age, both remain relevant for examining how contemporary media may influence public awareness (McCombs, 2014; McQuail, 2010). Artificial Intelligence has not replaced these theoretical foundations; rather, it is changing the mechanisms through which media messages are created, distributed, personalised, and evaluated.

The integration of AI into government-sponsored film campaigns can enhance strategic communication by improving audience targeting, increasing accessibility through multilingual translation and automated subtitling, combating online extremist propaganda, and providing measurable indicators of communication effectiveness (UNOCT, 2026). These technological innovations may strengthen the educational and persuasive capacity of films while supporting sustainable peacebuilding initiatives.

From a sustainability perspective, government-sponsored films may also contribute to progress toward the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). Their promotion of civic education, peaceful dialogue, responsible governance, and inclusive participation aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). AI may further support these objectives by enabling governments to design data-driven communication strategies that maximise public engagement while supporting efficient allocation of communication resources (Vinuesa et al., 2020).

Relevance of the Theoretical Framework to the Study

The combined application of the Hypodermic Needle Theory and Agenda-Setting Theory provides a complementary framework for examining the communicative functions of government-sponsored films in relation to terrorism awareness and national security discourse. The Hypodermic Needle Theory offers a classical perspective on the potential power of mass-mediated messages to influence audience perceptions, particularly through the persuasive presentation of information and emotionally charged narratives. Although its assumption of direct and relatively uniform media effects has been criticised for underestimating audience agency and contextual factors (Bineham,

1988; McQuail, 2010), the theory remains useful in this study for examining the intended persuasive orientation of government-sponsored cinematic communication.

Agenda-Setting Theory, on the other hand, provides a framework for examining how media content gives prominence and salience to particular social issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). In the context of *Black November*, the theory is relevant to the analysis of how issues such as environmental degradation, political marginalisation, corruption, economic exploitation, social inequality, and violent resistance are foregrounded within the narrative. Rather than assuming that the film directly determines audience opinions or government policy, the theory helps explain how sustained attention to these issues can shape public discourse and perceptions of their importance.

The study further considers Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a contemporary technological context within which cinematic communication is increasingly produced, distributed, personalised, and evaluated. AI-enabled technologies such as recommendation algorithms, audience analytics, automated translation, sentiment analysis, content moderation, and misinformation detection can influence the visibility, accessibility, and circulation of peace-oriented and counter-terrorism messages. In this regard, AI does not constitute a separate theory within the present framework; rather, it represents an emerging technological dimension through which the processes of media influence and issue salience can operate in contemporary digital environments.

Taken together, the two theories provide complementary perspectives for analysing the communicative strategies employed in *Black November*, while the incorporation of AI provides a contemporary technological context for understanding the production, distribution, targeting, and reception of cinematic messages. The framework therefore enables the study to examine how *Black November* constructs and foregrounds issues relating to terrorism, environmental injustice, political marginalisation, and social conflict, as well as the potential of AI-enabled media strategies to enhance the reach and effectiveness of contemporary public-awareness campaigns in Nigeria. As the study does not involve audience research, it does not claim to establish actual audience effects.

Film Analysis of *Black November* as a Case Study in Strategic Communication Against Terrorism

Synopsis of *Black November*

Directed by Jeta Amata, *Black November* (Amata, 2012) presents a compelling account of the socio-political and environmental struggles of the Niger Delta people. The film narrates the story of Ebiere Perema, a courageous activist who advocates peacefully for environmental justice, equitable resource distribution, and improved living conditions for her community. Her peaceful campaign gradually transforms into a larger movement following persistent government neglect, environmental degradation, exploitation by multinational oil companies, and violent repression of legitimate protests.

The narrative portrays how unresolved grievances, institutional corruption, economic inequality, and political exclusion can contribute to the radicalisation of vulnerable communities. Rather than portraying violent resistance as an isolated criminal act, *Black November* presents it as a consequence of prolonged structural injustice, thereby inviting audiences to interrogate the broader socio-economic conditions associated with conflict (Agina, 2013).

This narrative illustrates the central argument of this paper that films of this kind, including those that governments might sponsor or support, have the potential not merely to entertain but to educate citizens, stimulate critical reflection, promote civic engagement, and encourage peaceful alternatives to violence.

Structural Violence as a Catalyst for Terrorism

One of the film's greatest strengths lies in its portrayal of violent resistance as emerging in a context of governance failure rather than in isolation. In the film's narrative, such resistance arises where governments fail to provide justice, security, economic opportunity, and meaningful participation in governance (Ukiwo, 2007; Watts, 2004).

Throughout *Black November*, environmental pollution caused by oil exploration destroys traditional means of livelihood. Communities lose access to clean water, fertile farmland, and fishing resources while multinational corporations accumulate enormous profits with minimal local benefits. Government institutions, rather than protecting affected citizens, frequently employ military force to suppress peaceful demonstrations.

The transformation of several characters from peaceful protesters into armed militants reflects the cumulative effects of frustration, marginalization, and perceived injustice. The film therefore suggests that violent conflict should not merely be confronted through military operations but also through policies addressing poverty, unemployment, environmental justice, corruption, and political inclusion.

This perspective aligns closely with contemporary counter-terrorism literature, which increasingly emphasises prevention through social development rather than relying exclusively on security operations (Schmid, 2013; UNDP, 2023; United Nations Secretary-General, 2015).

Government-Sponsored Films as Instruments of Counter-Terrorism Communication

Government-sponsored films can function as strategic communication instruments by seeking to influence public knowledge, attitudes, and behavior regarding national security. Unlike propaganda that merely seeks public compliance, effective public awareness films encourage critical thinking, civic participation, and informed decision-making.

Black November illustrates several potential communication functions:

1. Educating audiences about the socio-economic origins of violent conflict
2. Exposing the human cost of corruption and environmental injustice
3. Promoting dialogue instead of violent confrontation
4. Strengthening public empathy for conflict-affected communities
5. Encouraging accountability among public institutions.

The film can therefore be read as supporting preventive counter-terrorism communication by addressing the ideological and structural conditions associated with radicalisation rather than focusing solely on military responses.

Artificial Intelligence and the Contemporary Relevance of *Black November*

Although *Black November* was produced before the widespread adoption of Artificial Intelligence in media industries, its educational value could be extended through contemporary AI technologies (Martini, 2025; UNOCT, 2026).

AI-powered streaming platforms now personalize film recommendations according to audience interests and viewing behavior. Consequently, educational films addressing terrorism, peacebuilding, environmental justice, and civic responsibility can reach audiences that traditional broadcasting systems might overlook. Similarly, Natural Language Processing technologies facilitate multilingual subtitling and automatic translation, allowing government-sponsored films to reach diverse linguistic communities throughout Nigeria and beyond. Machine learning algorithms can further assist communication practitioners by analysing audience engagement, identifying emotional responses, evaluating public sentiment, and estimating behavioral change following exposure to counter-terrorism campaigns.

Generative Artificial Intelligence also provides opportunities for:

1. Developing educational discussion guides accompanying films
2. Creating interactive learning modules for schools and universities
3. Producing accessible versions for persons with disabilities
4. Generating multilingual awareness campaigns
5. Supporting digital preservation of culturally significant films.

Nevertheless, ethical safeguards remain essential. Governments must ensure that AI technologies respect privacy, minimise algorithmic bias, prevent misinformation, and maintain transparency in public communication (Floridi et al., 2018; Jobin et al., 2019; UNOCT, 2026).

Digital Media Ecosystems and Public Awareness

The contemporary communication environment extends far beyond cinema halls. Streaming services, social networking platforms, mobile applications, and online educational portals have transformed how audiences encounter films. Productions such as *Black November* could achieve wider public reach when integrated into digital communication strategies.

Social media discussions, online screenings, educational webinars, university curricula, and community dialogue programmes can extend the reach of cinematic narratives beyond the original film experience, which is consistent with audience-reception findings that *Black November* works best within a broader framework of strategies (Agina, 2018).

Artificial Intelligence can further strengthen these digital ecosystems by identifying audience preferences, recommending relevant educational content, and evaluating communication outcomes through real-time analytics.

Consequently, films can increasingly function as interactive public education resources rather than passive entertainment products.

Sustainability and Peacebuilding in *Black November*

Beyond terrorism, *Black November* addresses broader sustainability concerns that remain highly relevant today.

Environmental degradation, poor governance, unequal resource distribution, social exclusion, and economic exploitation collectively undermine sustainable development. The film portrays environmental injustice as a source of political instability, community conflict, forced displacement, and violent resistance, a dynamic that scholarship on the Niger Delta also examines (Ukiwo, 2007; Watts, 2004).

Viewed through the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, *Black November* can be read as relating to the following goals (United Nations General Assembly, 2015):

SDG 4 – Quality Education, by promoting civic learning and public awareness.

SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities, by highlighting unequal distribution of national resources.

SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities, by encouraging peaceful coexistence and community resilience.

SDG 13 – Climate Action, through its depiction of environmental destruction in the Niger Delta.

SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, by advocating accountable governance, human rights, and peaceful conflict resolution.

The integration of these sustainability perspectives indicates that terrorism prevention is closely linked to broader efforts to promote justice, inclusive development, environmental stewardship, and democratic governance.

Implications for Public Policy

The analysis of *Black November* suggests that government-sponsored or government-supported films of this kind could occupy a valuable position within Nigeria's national communication strategy for peacebuilding, alongside other measures.

Rather than depending exclusively upon military campaigns, governments should invest in professionally produced films capable of educating citizens, countering extremist narratives, strengthening media literacy, and encouraging constructive civic participation.

Partnerships among government agencies, universities, filmmakers, technology companies, and civil society organisations can further expand the effectiveness of these initiatives.

Artificial Intelligence should be employed responsibly to improve audience targeting, monitor communication effectiveness, personalize educational content, and combat digital misinformation while maintaining ethical standards and protecting democratic freedoms (Floridi et al., 2018; UNOCT, 2026).

Ultimately, *Black November* illustrates that sustainable peace depends not merely upon defeating terrorism but upon addressing the structural conditions that can enable violent extremism to flourish.

Conclusion

This study examined government-sponsored films as strategic communication instruments for raising public awareness of terrorism and violent extremism, using *Black November* as the principal case study. The analysis demonstrates the potential of film to function beyond entertainment by providing a platform for public education, civic engagement, social reflection, and peacebuilding. Through its representation of environmental injustice, political marginalisation, corruption, economic exploitation, and violent resistance in the Niger Delta, *Black November* highlights how unresolved structural grievances may contribute to conditions associated with violent conflict and radicalisation.

The application of the Hypodermic Needle and Agenda-Setting theories provides useful perspectives for understanding the potential influence of government-sponsored films on public perceptions and the salience of terrorism-related issues. However, the effectiveness of such films depends on factors including narrative credibility, cultural relevance, audience interpretation, accessibility, and the broader communication environment. Consequently, film should be regarded

not as a standalone solution to terrorism but as one component of a broader strategy of public education, peacebuilding, and social mobilisation.

The study further highlights the growing significance of Artificial Intelligence in contemporary strategic communication. AI-supported audience analytics, multilingual translation, recommendation systems, sentiment analysis, accessibility technologies, and misinformation detection provide opportunities to expand the reach and effectiveness of public-awareness campaigns. Nevertheless, their deployment requires appropriate ethical safeguards relating to privacy, transparency, data protection, human rights, algorithmic accountability, and freedom of expression. Recent United Nations guidance similarly emphasises that AI should support prevention efforts while being governed responsibly and in line with human rights (UNOCT, 2026). AI should therefore complement rather than replace human creativity, professional judgement, and ethical oversight.

From the perspective of sustainable development, government-sponsored films have the potential to contribute to civic education, peaceful coexistence, social inclusion, environmental awareness, and institutional accountability. These functions are particularly relevant to SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), while their potential to strengthen social cohesion and community resilience also relates to SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

Ultimately, the study argues that film can serve as an important component of counter-terrorism communication when supported by responsible governance, culturally relevant narratives, ethical technological innovation, media literacy, and inclusive public communication. Addressing terrorism and violent extremism therefore requires a multidimensional approach that complements security interventions with education, social justice, environmental responsibility, responsible governance, and constructive dialogue. In this context, government-sponsored films, supported appropriately by emerging technologies such as AI, can contribute to a broader communication framework for peacebuilding, public awareness, and sustainable social development.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis, the study recommends that:

1. The Federal Government of Nigeria should increase investment in professionally produced films that promote peacebuilding, civic education, social cohesion, and public awareness of terrorism and violent extremism.
2. Government agencies should establish collaborative partnerships with Nollywood producers, universities, communication scholars, civil society organisations, and technology experts to develop culturally relevant and evidence-based public-awareness campaigns.
3. Artificial Intelligence should be responsibly integrated into government communication initiatives through tools such as multilingual translation, accessibility enhancement, audience analytics, recommendation systems, and misinformation detection, subject to appropriate ethical oversight, data protection, transparency, and respect for human rights.
4. Educational institutions should incorporate relevant films, including *Black November*, into appropriate curricula in media studies, theatre arts, communication, peace and conflict studies, and civic education. Such films should be used as materials for critical discussion rather than presented uncritically as factual accounts of terrorism or conflict.
5. Counter-terrorism communication should address structural conditions that may contribute to violent extremism, including unemployment, corruption, environmental degradation,

political exclusion, poverty, and social inequality, rather than relying exclusively on military intervention.

6. Future government-sponsored productions should utilise emerging media technologies, including AI-assisted subtitling, digital preservation, interactive educational platforms, social media distribution, and streaming services, to expand audience reach and engagement.
7. Future research should empirically examine audience responses to government-sponsored films in order to determine whether and to what extent such films influence knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, and behavioural intentions concerning terrorism, violent extremism, and peacebuilding, particularly within African contexts where scholarship remains comparatively limited.

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