

CONTEMPORARY FILM MARKETING: LEVERAGING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR FILM PROMOTION IN *MARRIAGE O'CLOCK*

MBEDE, Aniebiet Unwana, PhD

Department of Performing Arts

Akwa Ibom State University

aniebietmbede@aksu.edu.ng

08065807601

Abstract

This study examines the intersection between new media and film marketing in the digital age, leveraging social media as a promotional apparatus in the Nigerian film industry. As digital media increasingly shapes audience behavior, filmmakers are moving beyond the barricades of traditional film marketing methods to embrace the interactive power of social media. This study investigates how platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube were utilised to create awareness, drive engagement, and influence viewership decisions for the film, Marriage O'clock. This study is underpinned by Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Social Media Engagement Theory in its framework and deploys the quantitative content analysis of the promotional models adopted for the marketing of the film across digital platforms. This is reflected in increased awareness and conversion to box office success through behind-the-scene content, trailers, and influencer collaborations. In the light of the foregoing, this study reiterates the need to integrate social media strategies from the pre-production phase to post-release of films to enhance visibility and establish loyal digital communities of film viewers. Findings reveal a shift from traditional marketing methods, to innovative social media campaigns which are pivotal and operative machinery for film promotion, globally. The study recommends that, filmmakers should invest in digital marketing training, adopt emotionally engaging content strategies, and collaborate with influencers to maximise impact, providing practical guidelines to film makers and marketers to effectively navigate the evolving global digital landscape.

Keywords: Digital Media, Film Marketing, Film Promotion, Nollywood, Social Media

Introduction

In the twenty-first century, human interactions have been reshaped by the rise of digital technology. The way people work, talk, love, buy, sell and live life have been remarkably transformed by digital technology. This transformation occurs chiefly through smartphones, social media, and virtual communication platforms. Globally, the template available for the marketing and promotion of films has become more accessible, hence the rise in independent film promotion as an integrated approach to create increased visibility and market growth for the film business. Film producers now work with strategic marketing budgets and go beyond traditional forms of promotion through advertisements on television, radio, posters, billboards and newspaper publications and migrate to digital platforms, leveraging the fluidity and virality of digital communication networks for film promotion. The global film market has therefore been repositioned through the advantageous use of social media platforms to create short clips in the

form of film trailers, behind-the-scene contents, influencer partnerships and other such viral campaigns which are prompted to draw the attention of viewers and build anticipation of the film material to gain traction in the crowded attention landscape of the digital space.

In 2024, the University of Boston College of Communication undertook a digital survey reflecting that, “up to 50% of the marketing budget is spent on internet and social media campaigns. Social media sites such as Facebook, YouTube and Instagram provide an open environment where teasers, behind-the-scenes moments, polls, competitions and film clip content created by the user can be published daily, thus encouraging natural sharing. As social media scales back content moderation and the use of generative Artificial Intelligence AI to create realistic imitations of celebrities” (Michelle Amazeen 1). These contemporary film marketing strategies leverage social media as an apparatus to create awareness, drive engagement, and influence viewership decisions for film productions. This study is underpinned Fred Davis’s *Technology Acceptance Model* (TAM) and *Social Media Engagement Theory* in its framework and analysis of the promotional models adopted for the marketing of the film, *Marriage O’clock*, across digital platforms.

In Kimberly Rosenfeld’s work, *Terms of the Digital Age: Realities and Cultural Paradigms*, she observes that, “As we entered the second decade of the twenty-first century, digital technology reached capabilities that opened a new era with its own ecosystem: an ecosystem that is dynamic by nature constantly rearranging, restructuring, expanding, and where new ideas sprout in to start ups that turn concepts into products. The unceasing innovation, shape-shifting, expansion of possibilities and excitement around ‘all things digital’ defines the digital age” (1). Overall, this study will cross-examine the use of social media in contemporary film promotion and its role as a dynamic platform for sharing film trailers, peeks from behind-the-scenes and interactive content in real-time to enable instant feedback and foster a sense of community among prospective viewers. Also, the collaboration with influencers and content creation in active promotional activities which is noticeably a viable tool for audience engineering, using the film *Marriage O’clock*. This study exposes the presentation and promotional possibilities of films leveraging social media for the advancement of film productions. Contemporary film productions make use of the vast digital technologies available for effective marketing and promotion.

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by “Fred Davis’s *Technology Acceptance Model* (TAM) which posits that the acceptance of technological systems is influenced by Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)” (320). The main stay of this proposition is to move art distribution channels from analog to digital platforms, so film promotion can go in tandem with the mindset and realities of the society or era in which it is domiciled. In the performative arts, “technology has the power to glamorise productions and improve the quality and delivery of messages” (Esekong Andrew-Essien 399). It is such delivery of film production to the viewers that require leveraging social media to make for ease and effective distribution. According to Fred Davis, *Technology Acceptance Model* (TAM) posits that there are two factors that determine whether a computer system will be accepted by its potential users: (1) perceived usefulness, and (2) perceived ease of use. *Technology Acceptance Model* (TAM) was introduced by Fred Davis in 1986 for his Doctorate proposal as an adaptation of Theory of Reasonable Action, TAM is specifically tailored for modeling users’ acceptance of information systems or technologies (3). This model can be used to

predict the likelihood of acceptance of the digital tools and also in identifying barriers and technological complexities that could arise by the use of the cardinal product.

The key feature of this model is its emphasis on the perceptions of the potential user. That is, while the creator of a given technology product may believe the product is useful and user-friendly, it will not be accepted by its potential users unless the users share those beliefs. This draws largely from Stelarc's Evolutionary Futurism, "which focuses attention to the human-machine interface; extending conversations from the robotic to the actor-interactive work which incorporates the web, sound, music, text, videos and other computer-generated assistance, allowed to interface with its environment" (59).

Social Media Engagement (SME) Theory explains how users interact with platforms through likes, shares, comments and are foisted by a digitally bound connection, creating communities and fulfilling human needs of information, education, entertainment, social presence and identity. Juxtaposing user experience with value co-creation, the Social Media Engagement Theory holds at its core the social influence it musters from flexible platforms to achieve social interactions. The application of the theory affects film promotion through marketing, monitoring engagements in real time and understanding user behaviour through the spread of information and reactions to content. This theory supports the use of social influence as a platform design beyond popularity but as a strategic leverage for effective flexible networking, sharing, community building which is demographic specific and context driven with the possibility to achieve extraordinary possibilities in creating an appealing environment capable of attracting contemporary audiences.

Contemporary Film Marketing in Nigeria: Trends and Trajectories

Traditionally, film marketing relied on mass media like radio, television, posters, and newspaper ads. In Nigeria, grassroots methods such as flyers and local TV were common. The rise of the internet and mobile technology has transformed this, allowing filmmakers direct engagement with audiences in what Jenkins describes as 'convergence culture', a blend of old and new media in a participatory environment. As technology advanced, trailers evolved from mere promotional tools to dynamic teasers, capturing the essence of the cinematic experience. In the 1990s, trailers underwent a paradigm shift, embracing minimalism to create maximum impact.

According to Adeleye Oluwadarasimi, "The Nigerian film industry has gained international recognition over the years for many reasons, including but not limited to the growth in marketing and distribution channels. Successful campaigns include Kunle Afolayan's *Citation* and Kemi Adetiba's *King of Boys* (2018), which used Instagram, YouTube, and X for promotion" (1). Funke Akindele uses key social media platforms to promote her films by creating skits, sharable content in dances, social media challenges and also building a community of followers around her film projects. Like in the case of *Omo Ghetto: The Saga* (2020), *A Tribe Called Judah* (2023) the highest grossing Nollywood film with a box office success of over 1.5 billion Naira in ticket sales and also replicated the same promotional strength in the action-comedy drama, *Everybody Loves Jenifer* produced in December 2024 (www.boxofficemojo.com).

In a similar trend, Omoni Oboli's *Love in Every Word* repeated the use of structured posts, live sessions, and influencer collaborations to sustain audience anticipation and traction for her hit

movie of 2025. The release and distribution of the film as recorded was premiered direct-to-technology on YouTube channel on March 7, 2025 on *Omoni Oboli TV*. The reception and milestones of the YouTube film got 2 million views in the first 24 hours of release and the film reached 4.3 million views within 72 hours on the tube. By the first week, it had amassed 11.5 million views. At one point, view count reportedly crossed 30 million views in eight months, forcing a sequel *Love in Every Word (The Wedding) Part 2* released in November 2025 which gathered over 20 million views within the first two months of release, confirming its status as one of the fastest-growing Nigerian films on YouTube. (www.Nollywoodlife.com)

Nollywood, Africa's largest film industry, has gradually embraced social media, moving from low-tech production to digital promotion. According Ibraheem Adamu, "the African Movie Database reflects over 70% of Nigerian filmmakers use social media for marketing, aided by smartphone accessibility. Viral short videos and teasers maximize exposure with minimal cost. Effective strategies in contemporary film marketing includes: diverse content types (trailers, memes), hashtag campaigns, influencer partnerships, user-generated content, and contests" (32). These tactics enhance visibility and emotional connection with audiences, essential in entertainment marketing. Filmmakers face challenges such as limited internet access in rural areas, low digital literacy, algorithm changes that reduce reach, and content saturation. Without a clear digital strategy, standing out is difficult. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and X enable users to share content and interact in real time, making them powerful marketing tools. These platforms facilitate trailers, live sessions, behind-the-scenes content, and viral campaigns, this allows for multiple promotional avenues opened up through the use of social media.

The experiment with *Marriage O'clock* contributes to the innovative repertory of the filmic experience as practical knowledge in the arts, by creating the plinth for participation, interdisciplinary collaborations and worthwhile experience for cast, crew and audience members. The study has exposed the cast and crew members to the technical and artistic possibilities of futuristic productions, bridging the gap between traditional promotional tools and digitally driven matrix. This will involve creating strong digital assets like posters, trailers and log line, situating the promotion within a target market demographic and building a compelling narrative around the film and the major actors in a production, to make the film easily discoverable to audience members online.

Leveraging Social Media for Film Promotion in *Marriage O'clock*

Marriage O'clock, a film written and directed by Aniebiet Mbede mirrors this new reality of leveraging social media for film promotion. The story is centered around family and societal pressure on matters of marriage. The film, themed around managing family expectations, follows the life of a young woman, Lizzy Matthew, whose experiences mirror the everyday struggle of a mature and career-successful thirty-one-year-old woman. Lizzy's mother, Deaconess Grace Matthew constantly nags her to get married at all costs. The film is set in Uyo Urban City and follows Lizzy's emotional journey as she navigates heartbreak, family pressure, and rediscovery of love. Through laughter and pain, *Marriage O'clock* becomes a mirror of today's societal issues and offers a message of hope and emotional resolution.

In *Marriage O'clock*, the use of new media spans the entire production process: Pre-production, production and post-production. The use of new media platforms and gadgets becomes more than just background tools, but is reflected as a symbol of power, status, and emotional vulnerability. From Lizzy's talk show to her phone conversations with Alvin, technology becomes a character on its own. It shapes the story, fuels misunderstandings, and exposes the societal obsession with image. The Film *Marriage O'clock* explores themes around family pressure, friendships, relationships, societal expectations and inherently carry potential to engage audiences with **social issues** (e.g., the case of the lead character Lizzy getting married late, family pressures and how they affect marriages, stigma, negotiation of roles and gay and other sexuality related sub-themes) by embedding these themes in the film, *Marriage O'clock*. The film produced by Marriage Made Easy Academy Ltd., was promoted in three (3) Significant phases. The pre-launch, the launch (the film premiere) and the post screening engagement leading to a sustained community mobilization across social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok and a dedicated YouTube content channel.

Film Description

Title: *Marriage O'clock*

Genre: A Passionate Family Drama

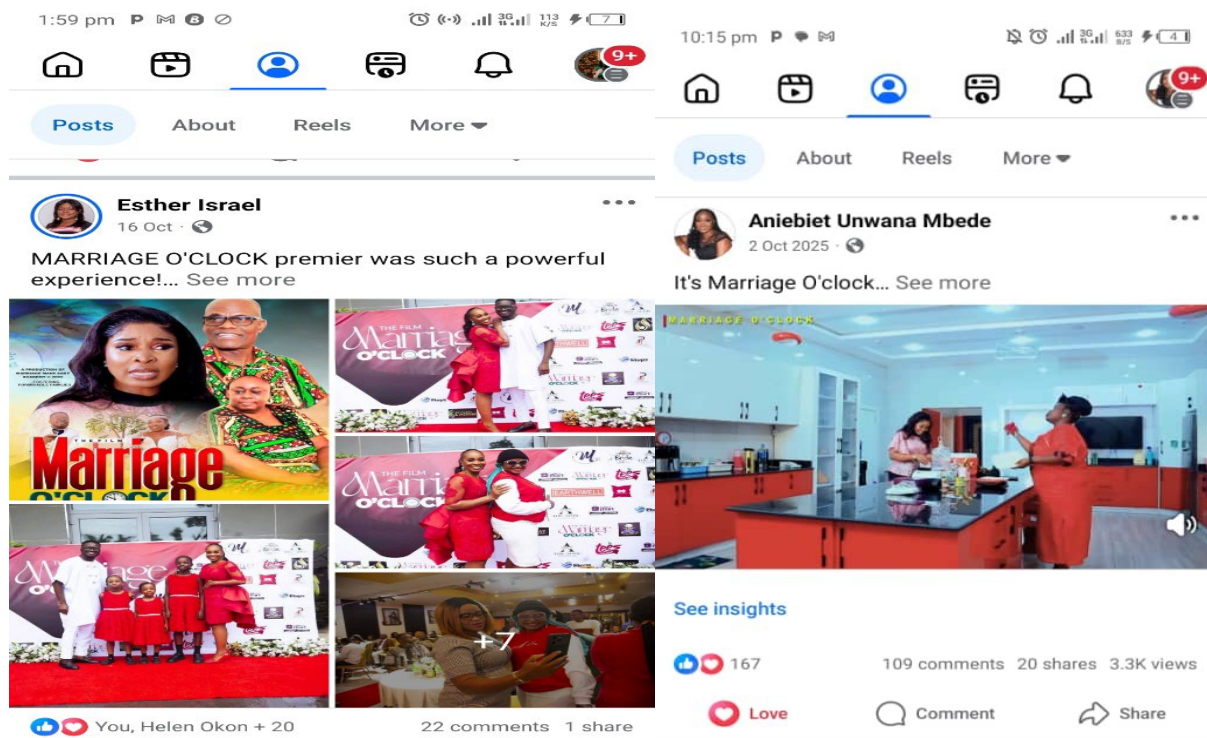
Tone: A realistic portrayal of relationship pressures and family expectations emphasizing conflict and social reflection on marital decision-making.

Setting: Uyo, present day.

Runtime: 90 minutes

Themes: Parental Pressure, Marital Realities, Societal Expectations

Cast: Special Appearance: Rev. (Dr.) Sylvanus & Pastor (Mrs.) ErikanUkafia (See Film Poster)



Plates1 & 2: Showing Film Promotion on Facebook and Red-Carpet moments at the Premiere
Source: Esther Israel/Aniebiet Unwana Mbede - Facebook *Marriage O'clock: The Film*

Phase 1: Pre-Launch (4 Weeks before Release)

- The release of the film poster and teaser with a campaign tagged: *It's Marriage O'clock*.
- Behind the Scene clips shared across social media platforms – Facebook (Live, Feed, Story), Instagram (Story), WhatsApp (Status), TikTok (Live).
- Launch of the following hashtag campaigns: #Marriageoclock #Marriagemadeeasy #lovewhispers
- Invite audience speculation with the poster asking, “What time is it? Response: *Marriage O'clock?*”
- Engage actors and influencers to record short video endorsements for the film, *Marriage O'clock* to encourage early registrations for the premiere of the film.

Phase 2: Launch and Screening Period (Week of Launch)

- Virtual Invitations shared across social media platforms – Facebook (Live, Feed, Story), Instagram (Story), WhatsApp (Status), TikTok (Live). Encourage live tweeting and sharing on Instagram stories via the use of the hashtag #MOC #marriageoclock.
- Host film screening and encourage live posting.
- Live sharing photographs, red-carpet moments, relationship discussion guide and direct audience to toolkit across social media platforms.

Phase 3: Post-Screening Engagement (Weeks after release)

- Release of short-form content: “5 Moments from the Film That Made Us Scream” sharing clips on TikTok, Instagram and Facebook.
- Launch “Share Your Story” contest: invite audience to upload short video about marriage expectations; winner gets a mention, prize or meet-up.
- Host weekly live sessions: “*Marriage O'clock* Discussion Hour” on Instagram Live with guests featuring guest marriage counsellors in a follow-up community event.
- Partner with a local church (King's Bride Family Church, Uyo on marriage workshops based on the film.
- Continue to Share photos and videos of workshop on social media.
- Monitor metrics: number of views and engagements, posts with hashtag, number of toolkits downloaded, number of the film screening held in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State but viewed across the globe through leveraging social media platforms for its promotion.

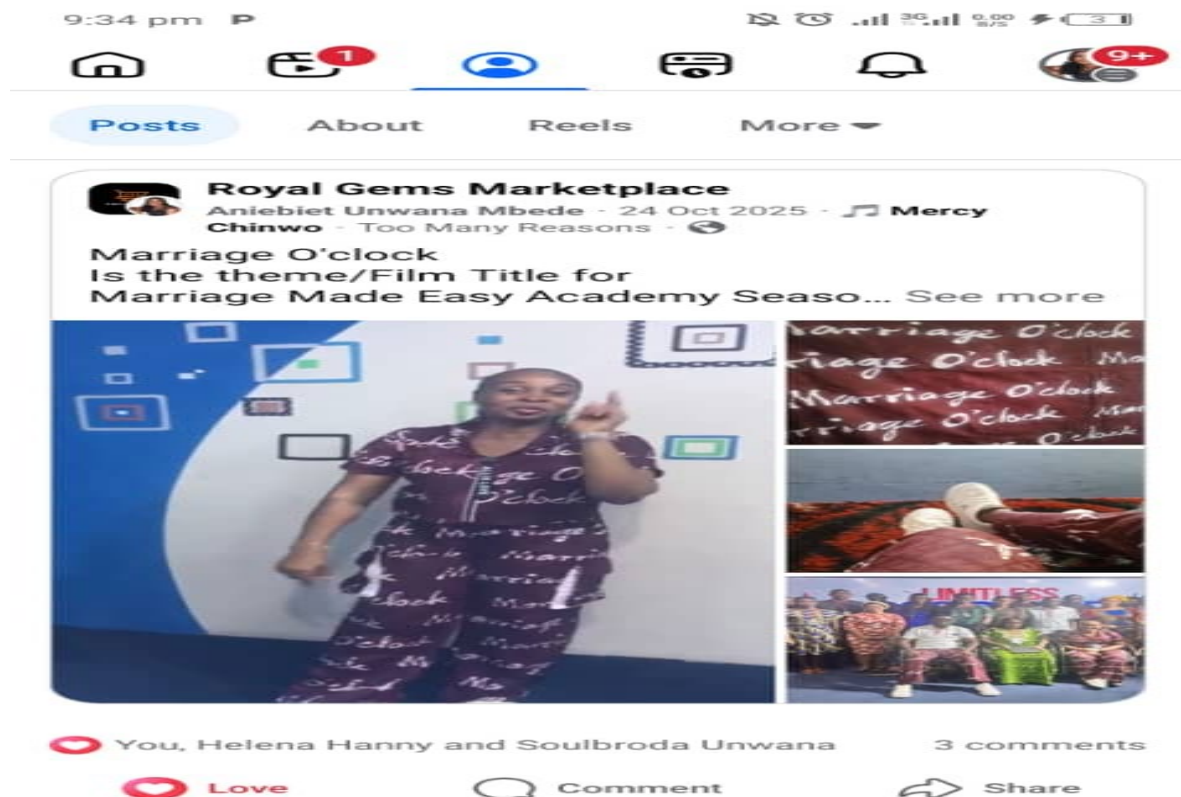


Plate 3: Showing Brand Promotion Strategy using customised fabric for social media buzz
Source: RoyalGems Marketplace Online - Facebook

The film was produced by Marriage Made Easy Academy with Unwana Mbede as its Executive producer in a city premiere held on Sunday, October 12, 2025 at AHTA Isong Hall, Ceedapeg Hotels, Maitama, Ewet Housing Estate, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The first viewing audience of the film, *Marriage O'clock* were treated to an evening of relaxation, laughter, crying and loving reflections. According to Aniebiet Mbede, “new media possesses the capacity to converge diverse voices and opinions, transmitting a wide range of ideas across borders, while retaining the ability to transform traditional mindsets and deconstruct systems that hinder progress, thereby creating new pathways for societal advancement”. The online community equally shared the practicality of the message of the film, joining the event live (social platforms, streaming, mobile, interactive tools) to amplify the film’s impact and translate awareness into action in the society

1. Pre-release Engagement and Social Buzz

- Teasers/Trailers on social platforms: Use of Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp Instagram, YouTube to release the film poster, teasers that highlight key social messages, not only heightened the audience’s expectation but sparked conversations on the underlying issues of marriage and the right time to marry in the society
- Behind-the-scenes content: Interviews with the director, cast, community voices about why the film matters socially. This helps frame the film as more than entertainment. It becomes a social article that can spark conversations and bring issues to the right perspective.

- Hashtag campaign: Create a unique hashtag. Some of the hashtags used for the social media campaign were: #marriagemadeeasy, #Marriageoclock, #lovewhispers, #fosteringformidablefamilies) to gather audience posts, conversations, memes around the film.
- Influencer and Community Partnership Amplification: The film engaged religious and social influencers, activists, NGO voices who specialise in marriage and social change act in the film and also to talk about the film and its themes. Rev. (Dr.) & Pastor (Mrs.) ErikanUkafia, the Global Pastors of Insight Bible Church featured in the film.



Plate 4: Showing Dr. Sylvanus & Erikan Ukafia on set (Influencer/Brand Promotion Strategy)
Source: Aniebiet Unwana Mbede - Facebook *Marriage O'clock: The Film*

2. Interactive Online Platforms and Participation

- Film Online Group: Provide not only film info but interactive sections: discussion forum, blog posts, “share your story” submissions, resources to learn more about issues raised. This was effectively done on Facebook (Love Whispers Group and on Whatsapp Channels).
- Social media challenges or prompts: Users were asked to post a short videos or stories and film content tagging their followers on the campaign. This built peer engagement and

crowd sourced sharing. The winner of the online contest, Barr. Mmeyerene Ettete, went home with a reward from the sponsors of the film, *Marriage O'clock*.

3. Collaboration with Corporate Organisations

The film, *Marriage O'clock* forged formidable partnerships with companies and organisations working on marriage rights, gender equality and youth empowerment as part of the corporate social responsibilities. Some of which includes: Earthwell Petro-Allied Company, Alvard and Moore Engineering Company, The April's Celebration, this helped in funding and promotion through new media channels. Leveraging WhatsApp groups for mobilization: share the film link, discussion prompts, encourage local watch-groups (church, community centre and university y campus tour).

4. Streaming and Digital Distribution

Uploading the film on YouTube (and segments on TikTok, Facebook, Instagram) to streaming services or social-media-friendly formats (trailers, shorter episodes cuts for mobile viewers). According to Mbede, exploring the digital tools can conveniently foist creative images, videos, animation and sound scape to improve communication and presentations aired on multiple internet-driven applications like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook streaming (9). High mobile penetration in Nigeria means mobile-first distribution is powerful as seen in *Marriage O'clock*. Using Facebook Watch, Live Premiere, YouTube premieres and even IGTV/TikTok for short versions/trailers. The producers are also considering partnerships with telecoms/data bundles to reduce cost for viewers making watching accessible.

5. Data, Metrics and Adaptive Feedback

Using online analytics to track engagement across social media platforms to locate how many views, shares, hashtag usage, demographics and geographies. This helps tailor further film projections. As observed many viewers are youths aged 18-25, the film is target specific to young adults around the university and church youth campaigns. Also, the feedback collected feedback via online surveys or polls: "What part of the film affected you most?", "Would you talk to someone about marriage expectations now that you've seen this?" will be used to refine subsequent films addressing questions raised by audience.

6. Sustained Engagement: Beyond the Film

- The release follow-up content: mini-documentaries, podcasts with real people whose lives reflect the film's themes, "what happens next" stories.
- Creation of an online community or forum where viewers can continue to engage with each other around issues of marriage, gender norms, societal expectation.
- Use email newsletters or WhatsApp broadcast lists to send monthly prompts, stories, challenges ("This month's theme: Communication in Marriage").
- Games and quizzes about myths around marriage, share results; badges for completing "discussion sessions" are also considered.

Challenges of Using Social Media for Film Promotion in *Marriage O'clock*

There are many challenges in using new media channels for film production. In an interview with the director of the film, Aniebiet Mbede, PhD she made the following observations:

1. Surface-level campaigns: some of the social messaging was weak as the users focused more on the entertainment rather than the message of the content. The teasers, posts, and the online challenge deemphasized the social questions, paying more attention to the trend of a new movie alert.
2. One-off screening effect: Screening once and then forgetting the audience will not produce optimal change. So, the plan for follow-up activities and sustained engagement should be heightened.
3. Digital Divide: Some target audiences (rural, low-income) may have limited access to streaming or social-media. Even some offline community could not pay for the tickets for the premiere screening.
4. Measuring Impact: It can be difficult to track social change (attitude/behaviour shift). And so, building measurement tools into the campaign: pre-/post- surveys, track discussions, stories of personal change will go a long way to tracking this social progress.
5. Message fatigue: The need to heighten entertaining, visually compelling, emotionally resonating layers that will carry the message of social change via the story was a major task in *Marriage O'clock*. This will be avoided if well-structured themes are engaged as observed in the film *Marriage O'clock*. The film offers lessons for the entire Nigerian creative space. It shows that stories rooted in everyday experiences can achieve both entertainment and enlightenment.

However, thoughtfulness must be given to the rise in trends of unboxing huge PR packages as a form of invitation to the cinemas and for film releases across board to lower the broader economic implications of such grand gestures. By integrating digital culture into stage storytelling, Mbede encourages younger playwrights to reflect real social shifts rather than copy foreign styles. The film also inspires producers to adapt local works for streaming platforms, ensuring that socially conscious art reaches global audiences. Every major Nigerian film carries a lesson, and *Marriage O'clock* is no different. Mbede's ability to wrap moral truths in relatable humour ensures that the film entertains without boredom. Audiences leave not only laughing but reflecting accepting the use of technology and the perceived ease of use of the information at their disposal.

Conclusion

This study concludes that although traditional methods of film promotion still yield results, contemporary film promotion increasingly leverages social media platforms to generate interest, attract audience attention, and engage wider audiences, thereby contributing to box office success, as exemplified in Mbede's *Marriage O'clock*. This study acknowledges the limits of leveraging the use of social media for film promotion, hence the findings may not apply universally, especially to areas that do not have access to internet facilities and other electronic gadgets like, the smart phone. Overtime, advancements in technology and audience taste may change and this phenomenon can negatively affect the effective edge of social media as a promotional tool. The stated limitations notwithstanding, this study reiterates the relevance of social media as a strategic platform for the promotion of films in the digital age.

In conclusion, contemporary film marketing should seek ways to engage digital competence through the use of social media platforms for film promotion, providing ways to drive the message across to audiences, sharing ideas, conveying feelings and disseminating information. In its findings, the use of digital platforms enhances the spread of promotional content and engagement of viewers.

Recommendations

1. Promote the use of social media platforms for film promotion so it can yield both economic and community value by attracting contemporary audiences to view film productions.
2. This template for contemporary film promotion should be adopted to drive better patronage in the film industry.
3. Emphasis should be given to industry collaborations and effective training for capacity development in the area of film, media and technology for better economic sustainability of the global film industry.
4. Further research and exploitation of human and technological resources should be encouraged by all frontiers of film and media practice, especially in the use of social media for film promotion. Encourage Collaboration Between Media Practitioners and Producers: Such partnerships can amplify socially conscious film productions across digital platforms.
5. Incorporate Media Literacy in Performing Arts Curricula: Future artists should learn to engage technology critically, using it to tell their stories responsibly.

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