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Perception of Undergraduate Students on Promotion of Yoruba Cultural Values in the Netflix Biopic, *Lisabi*

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Abstract

Global streaming platforms, such as Netflix, are increasingly reshaping media consumption patterns and influencing the preservation and visibility of indigenous cultural narratives. In Nigeria, this shift has brought renewed attention to how local audiences engage with culturally rooted productions. This study, anchored on Cultural Hegemony and Reception theories, examines the perceptions of Westland Polytechnic students regarding the promotion of Yoruba cultural values in the biopic film Lisabi on Netflix. A quantitative approach was employed, using a descriptive survey design. Data were gathered through a structured online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms to 281 purposively selected respondents. The findings revealed that a significant majority perceived Lisabi as a culturally rich and historically significant production, with strong communication of Yoruba values such as communalism, heroism, and spirituality. The accessibility of the film on Netflix was found to enhance its reach and appreciation among younger audiences. Ultimately, the study concludes that biographical films can serve as vital tools for cultural education and identity reinforcement. It recommends that more indigenous narratives be developed and distributed through international streaming platforms, with future research expanding to more diverse institutions to strengthen the generalisability of findings.

Keywords: Yoruba cultural values, *Lisabi*, Biopic film, Netflix, Cultural representation, Digital streaming, Audience perception

Introduction

The media plays a crucial role in shaping cultural perceptions and preserving heritage through storytelling (Irene & Victor, 2011; Bassey, Iwok & Afangide, 2024). Film, as a dominant medium of mass communication, serves as an essential tool for transmitting and reinforcing cultural values (Dairo, 2021). In the context of Yoruba culture, biographical films (biopics) have been instrumental in documenting historical figures and their contributions. The production of *Lisabi* on Netflix represents a significant attempt to showcase Yoruba cultural values to a global audience. Over the years, the Nigerian film industry, popularly known as Nollywood, has been pivotal in projecting African culture (Adesemoye, 2023; Ndu, 2025). Moreover, the rise of digital streaming platforms like Netflix has revolutionised film distribution, allowing indigenous narratives to reach a wider audience (Badru, Hashim, & Adisa, 2022; Oguamanam, 2018). This is as streaming services provide an opportunity for cultural resurgence by offering content that reflects local heritage and values (Oguamanam, 2018). However, this digital shift raises questions about how cultural elements are presented, interpreted, and received by younger audiences, particularly students in higher institutions.

The Yoruba ethnic group, one of the largest in Nigeria, has a rich cultural history deeply rooted in folklore, traditional governance, and heroism (Balogun, 2021; Falola, 1997). *Lisabi*, a legendary warrior and liberator of the Egba people, is a significant historical figure whose story embodies themes of bravery, unity, and resistance against oppression. The retelling of his story in a biopic film is expected to serve not only as an entertainment

medium but also as an educational tool that reinforces Yoruba cultural identity. Previous studies have indicated that historical films influence audience perceptions by shaping their understanding of past events and cultural values (Plantinga, 2021; Kansteiner, 2018; Usman, Nonyerem, & Joshua, 2014).

However, the extent to which *Lisabi* effectively represents Yoruba cultural elements remains an area of inquiry. Student perception is a crucial factor in evaluating media effectiveness, as youths constitute a major demographic consuming digital content (xxx). Research has shown that media representations can either reinforce or distort cultural narratives, depending on the accuracy and depth of storytelling (Arendt, 2023; Gao, Yuan, Zhang, Li, & Shen, 2024; Wheatley, 2024). Given the prominence of Western influences in contemporary media , there is a concern that the younger generation may not fully appreciate or connect with indigenous historical narratives unless they are presented in engaging and relatable formats (Balogun, Aruoture, & Haruna, 2024). This raises the question: how do Westland Polytechnic students perceive the production of Yoruba cultural values in Lisabi? Additionally, while some scholars believe that biographical films serve as an effective means of historical education, others argue that dramatisation and fictionalisation may compromise historical accuracy, leading to misconceptions. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the perception of Westland Polytechnic students regarding Lisabi, focusing on factors such as cultural authenticity, historical accuracy, narrative effectiveness, and overall impact on their understanding of Yoruba heritage.

Furthermore, this research seeks to contribute to the discourse on media and cultural preservation by analysing audience reception and the impact of digital platforms on indigenous storytelling. By examining students' perspectives, this study will provide insights into whether *Lisabi* succeeds in promoting Yoruba heritage and fostering cultural awareness among young Nigerians. The findings will be valuable for filmmakers, cultural scholars, and policymakers interested in leveraging media for cultural sustainability.

Objectives of the Study

1. Assess the perception of Westland Polytechnic students on the representation of Yoruba cultural values in *Lisabi.*
2. Examine the extent to which *Lisabi* accurately portrays historical and traditional elements of Yoruba culture.
3. Analyse the impact of Netflix as a digital platform in promoting indigenous Yoruba heritage through the film.
4. Determine whether *Lisabi* influences students' appreciation and understanding of Yoruba cultural identity.

Research Questions

1. How do Westland Polytechnic students perceive the representation of Yoruba cultural values in *Lisabi*?

2. To what extent does *Lisabi* accurately depict historical and traditional elements of Yoruba culture?

3. What impact does Netflix as a digital streaming platform have on the accessibility and appreciation of Yoruba cultural heritage through *Lisabi*?

4. Does *Lisabi* enhance students' understanding and appreciation of Yoruba cultural identity?

Literature Review

Concept of biopic movies

Biographical films, commonly referred to as biopics, are cinematic narratives that dramatise the lives of real historical figures (Bingham, 2010; Fazlalizadeh & Ghassemi, 2019). These films blend factual accounts with dramatized elements to create compelling storytelling while preserving historical accuracy (Fazlalizadeh & Ghassemi, 2019; Heath, 2015). Scholars argue that biopics serve as a bridge between history and popular culture, making historical narratives more accessible to modern audiences (Letort, 2019; Stubbs, 2009; Petrolle, 2014).

African cinema, particularly in hubs like Nollywood, has increasingly embraced biopics as a means of documenting and celebrating historical figures (Uchenunu & Ramson, 2021). Films such as Queen Amina and October 1 highlight the lives and struggles of key historical figures in Nigeria. In the case of Lisabi, the film brings to life the heroism of Lisabi Agbongbo-Akala, a legendary Yoruba warrior who played a vital role in the Egba people's resistance against oppression. By dramatising his life

and achievements, the film serves as an educational tool that reinforces Yoruba identity and historical consciousness.

Cultural Representation in Biopic Film

Cultural representation in biopics involves the portrayal of traditions, values, language, customs, and identities of a particular ethnic or national group (Uchenunu & Ramson, 2021). A well-crafted biopic should provide an accurate reflection of the cultural setting in which historical events took place (Stubbs, 2009). Several key elements define effective cultural representation in biopics among which are language and dialogue (Uchenunu & Ramson, 2021). Biopics that depict indigenous communities must incorporate native languages to maintain authenticity (Cardús i Font, 2014). The use of Yoruba language in Lisabi is significant in preserving cultural integrity and ensuring that audiences connect with the historical context of the film. Also, traditional practices and rituals – biopics often portray religious and social customs unique to the culture being depicted (Uchenunu & Ramson, 2021). These include traditional ceremonies, dress codes, religious beliefs, and moral values. Films that neglect or misrepresent these aspects risk distorting historical narratives (Stubbs, 2009).

Cultural Preservation and Representation through Netflix

One of Netflix's major contributions to indigenous cinema is its role in cultural preservation (Lobato, 2019). Indigenous films often serve as a repository for language, traditions, and historical events, helping to sustain cultural identity among diaspora communities and younger generations (Lobato, 2019). By making such content accessible worldwide, Netflix facilitates cross-cultural appreciation while ensuring that native languages and traditions are not erased in an increasingly globalised world (Jenner, 2018).

However, scholars argue that while Netflix provides a platform for indigenous films, it also presents challenges regarding cultural authenticity (Wayne & Castro, 2025). The pressure to appeal to a global audience may lead to the dilution or modification of indigenous narratives to fit Western storytelling conventions (Wayne & Castro, 2025). For instance, the adaptation of traditional Yoruba myths or historical events for Netflix might prioritise cinematic appeal over historical accuracy.

Theoretical Framework

Cultivation Theory

According to Morgan and Shanahan (2010), Cultivation Theory, propounded by George Gerbner (1976), posits that prolonged exposure to media content shapes audience perceptions of reality. The theory suggests that repeated portrayals of cultural values in films and television influence how audiences understand and internalize those values over time (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010). In the context of this study, Lisabi as a biopic film serves as a medium through which Yoruba cultural values are depicted. The students' perception of Yoruba traditions, identity, and heritage may be shaped by how the film presents historical events and societal norms.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design, which enables the collection of data from a representative sample to describe opinions, attitudes, and perceptions regarding the film's portrayal of Yoruba cultural values. The survey research method is appropriate for this study as it allows for the quantification of audience perception while also capturing qualitative insights where necessary.

Population

The population for this study comprises students of Westland Polytechnic, Ilobu, Osun State. The institution has a large population of students from various departments. Students from different academic levels and disciplines are active users of social media platforms and are often engaged in online streaming.

Sample Size & Sampling Technique

From the list of admitted students for 2023/2024 academic session at Westland Polytechnic, the total student population is approximately 1,100 and these students are considered as the population from which a sample was drawn. Students, particularly those in

the younger demographic, are known to be active users of social media platforms. The sample size of 320 respondents from the population of the study was considered. The sample size was calculated using Guilford and Fluchter formula for estimating sample size. The formula is expressed as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+(e^2)\ N}$$

Where:

- n = required sample size
- N = population size (in this case, 1200 students)
- e = margin of error (usually expressed as a decimal, e.g., 0.05 for 5% margin of error)

Steps to Estimate the Sample Size:

1. Identify the Population Size (N): The population size is 970 students.
2. Decide on a Margin of Error (e): The margin of error reflects the level of precision you want. A common margin of error is 0.05 (5%).
3. Apply the Guilford and Fruchter Formula: Plug the population size (N) and margin of error (e) into the formula.

$$n = \frac{1100}{1+(0.05^2)\ (1000)}$$

$$n = \frac{1100}{1+0.0025 \times 1000}$$

$$n = \frac{1100}{1+2.5}$$

$$n = \frac{1100}{3.5}$$

$$n = 314.28$$

n□315

Therefore, the required sample size is approximately 315 students. Meanwhile, a purposive sampling technique was used to ensure that every student in the population had an equal chance of being selected. Purposive sampling is appropriate for this study because the respondents and known to the research and they are the one that can give accurate information as the case study of the research is concerned. was distributed across various departments at Westland Polytechnic to ensure diversity and inclusivity in the responses. This approach ensured that students with different academic backgrounds and social media usage patterns were included in the study.

Research Instrument

The primary instrument for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire using online Google doc forms. The questionnaire was designed to gather quantitative data on perception of undergraduate students on the promotion of Yoruba cultural values in the biopic film Lisabi on netflix. the questionnaire consisted of sections:section a demographic information: This section collected data on the respondents' age, gender, department, and academic level. While the section B will be responses from the respondents in regards to the research questions.

Method of Data Collection

The data collection process involved administering the questionnaire to students of Westland Polytechnic. Before the administration of the questionnaires, the researcher will permission from the institution's authorities and explained the purpose of the research to the respondents. A total of 292 questionnaires distributed using online means. For the online distribution, a Google Forms link was shared with the students through various social media groups (e.g., WhatsApp, Telegram).

Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis involves the organization, interpretation, and presentation of the data collected. The quantitative data from the questionnaires was analysed. Google Analytical tool was used for the data analysis to analyze and summarize the responses from the questionnaire. This will provide insights into the general trends in students' perceptions of Lisabi.

Data Presentation And Analysis

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Respondents' Demographic Profile

Demographics	Frequency	Percentages
Gender (n=320)		
Female	180	56.3%

Male	126	39.3%
Prefer not to say	14	4.4%
Age (n=316)		
16–20 years	54	17.1%
21–25 years	228	72.2%
26–30 years	32	10.1%
Above 30 years	2	0.6%
Accademic Level (n=322)		
ND I	41	13.0%
ND II	133	42.3%
HND I	81	25.7%
HND II	66	21.0%

Source: Survey Questionnaire (2025)

Table 1 shows the descriptive analysis of Westland Polytechnic student's characteristics. The table indicates that 39.3% were male while 56.3% were male. This shows that majority of respondents were male. The table also shows that 17.1% respondents were between 16-20 years of age, 72.2% were between 21-25years, 10.1% respondents were between 26-30 years of age. From the academic level, 21% respondents were HNDII students, 25.7% were HNDI students, 40.3% were NDII students, and 13% were ND I Students.

1. How do Westland Polytechnic students perceive the representation of Yoruba cultural values in *Lisabi*?

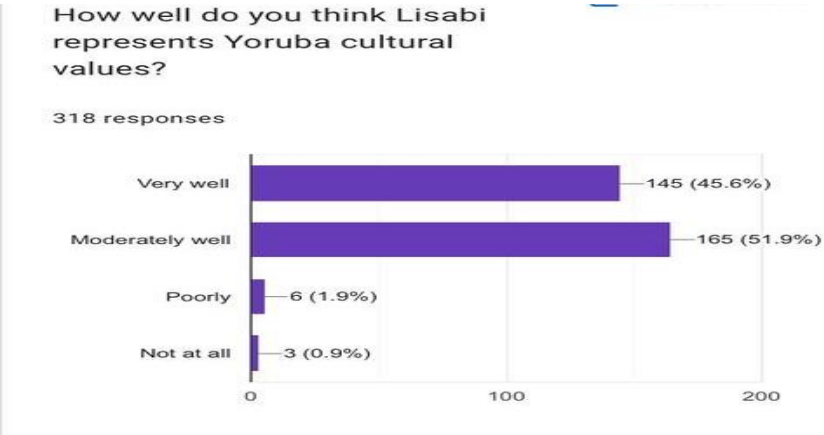


Fig 1: Perception of Yoruba Cultural Values in Lisabi (Source: Survey Questionnaire, 2025)

The analysis in Fig. 1 shows that 45.6% respondents think that Lisabi represents Yoruba cultural values very well, 51.9% respondents moderately well, 1.9% respondent's response was poor, and 0.9% respondents response was Not at all.

2. To what extent does *Lisabi* accurately depict historical and traditional elements of Yoruba culture?

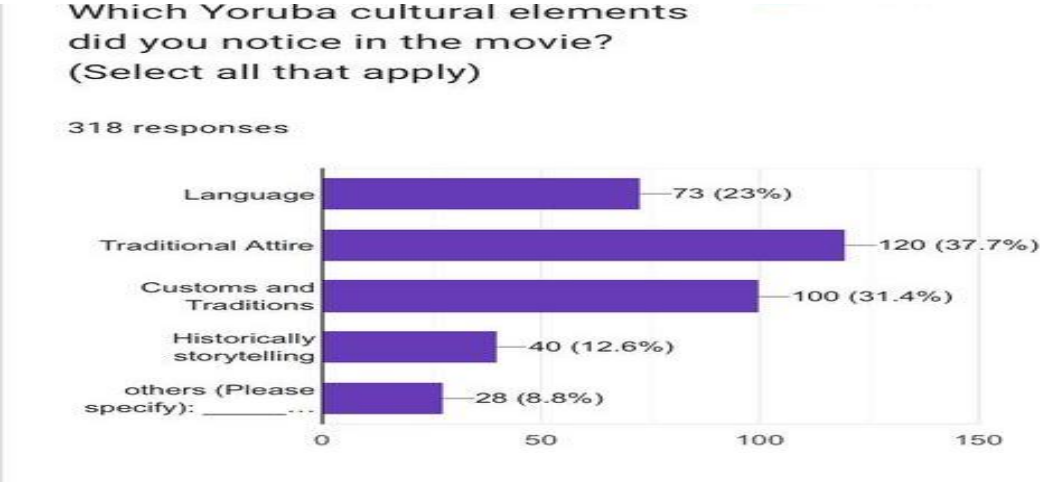


Fig 2: Cultural elements respondents noticed in Lisabi (Source: Survey Questionnaire, 2025)

Fig. 2 shows that 23% respondents said Yoruba Language is cultural elements they notice in Lisabi movie, 37.7% said they notice Traditional Attire, 31.4% said they notice customs and traditions, 12.6% said they notice Historical storytelling, while 8.8% respondents said they notice other things.

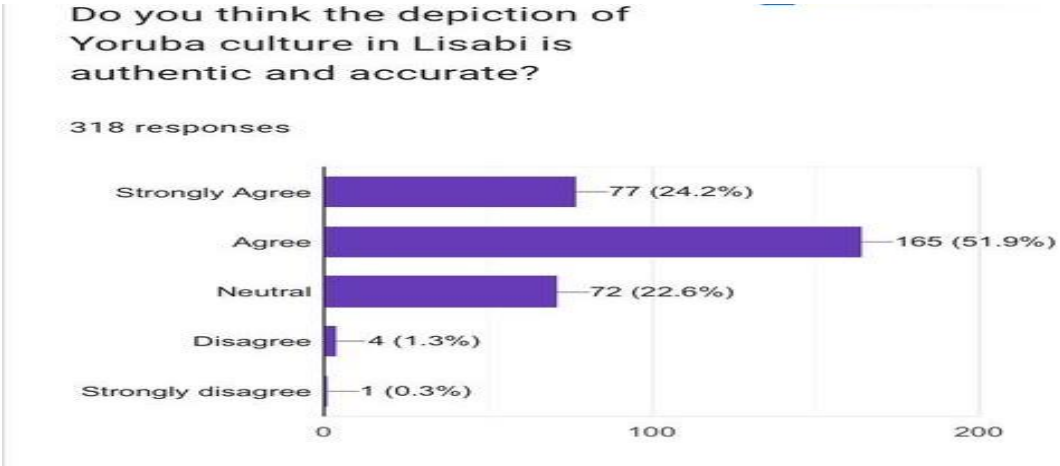


Fig 3: Perceived authenticity and accuracy of the depiction of Yoruba culture in Lisabi (Source: Survey Questionnaire, 2025)

As shown in Fig. 3, 24.2% respondents strongly agree that Yoruba culture in Lisabi is authentic and accurate, 51.9% respondents agree, 22.6% respondents are neutral, 1.3% disagree, while 0.3% respondents strongly disagree.

3. What impact does Netflix as a digital streaming platform have on the accessibility and appreciation of Yoruba cultural heritage through *Lisabi*?

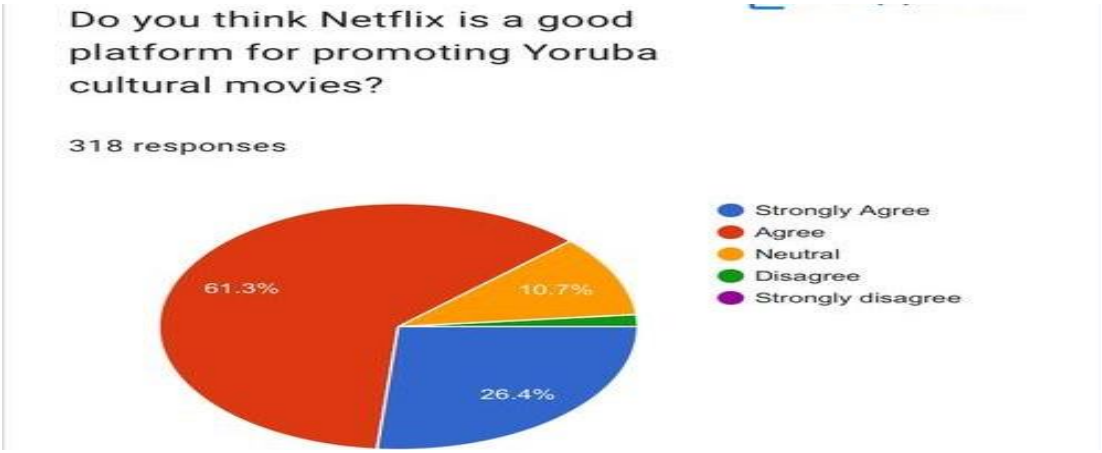


Fig 4: Perception of Netflix on the platform for promoting Yoruba cultural movies (Source: Survey Questionnaire, 2025)

Fig. 4 shows that 61.3% respondents agreed that Netflix is a good platform for promoting Yoruba cultural movies, 26.4% strongly agree that Netflix is a good platform for promoting Yoruba cultural movies, 10.7% are neutral, while some anonymous respondents were disagree and strongly disagree.

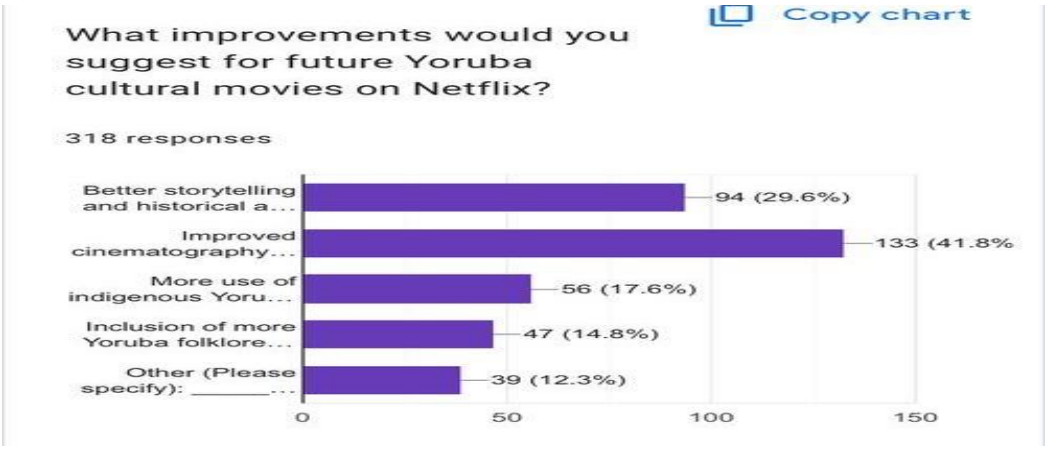


Fig 5: Suggested improvements for future Yoruba movies on Netflix (Source: Survey Questionnaire, 2025)

The study reveal that 29.6% respondents suggested better storytelling and historical accuracy as an improvement for future Yoruba cultural movies on Netflix, 41.8% respondents suggested improved cinematography and production quality, 17.6% suggested more use of indigenous Yoruba language, 14.8% suggested inclusion of more Yoruba folklore and traditions, while 12.3% respondents suggested by specified other means for improvement (See Fig. 5).

4. Does *Lisabi* enhance students' understanding and appreciation of Yoruba cultural identity?

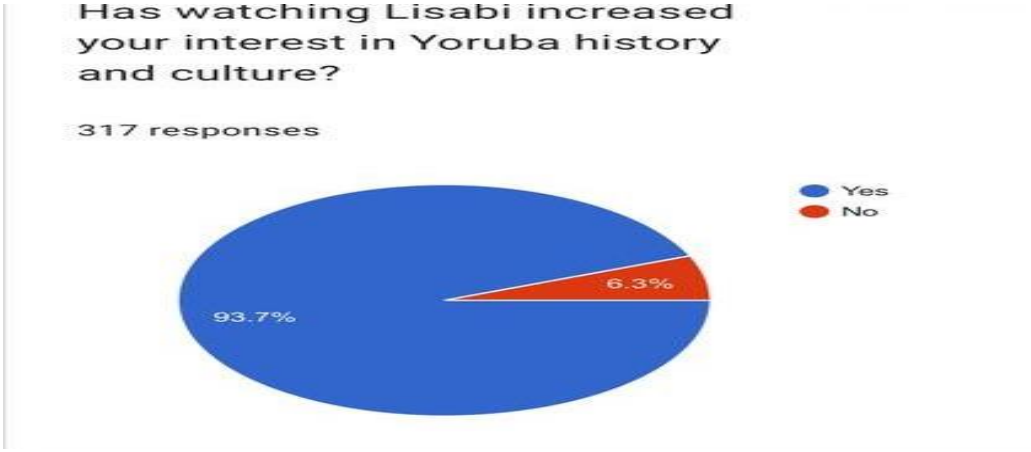


Fig 6: Perceived influence of watching Lisabi on interest in Yoruba history and culture (Source: Survey Questionnaire, 2025)

Moreover, Fig. 6 shows that 93.7% which constitute the majority of the respondents confirmed by YES that Lisabi has increased their interest in Yoruba history and culture, 6.3% respondents said NO.

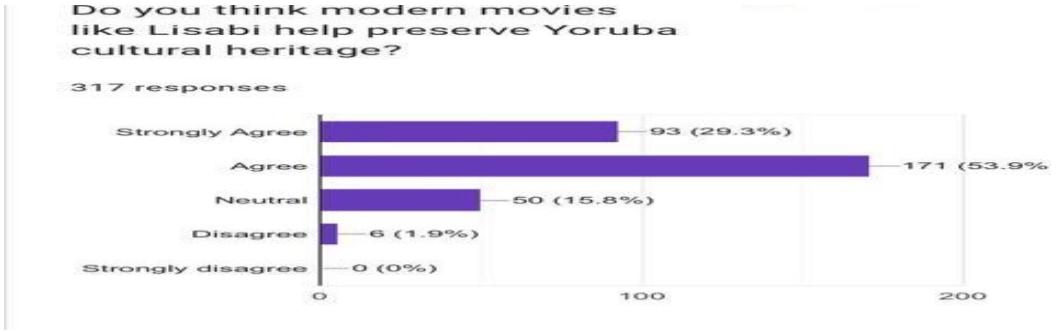


Fig 7: Extent to which modern movies like Lisabi help preserve Yoruba cultural heritage (Source: Survey Questionnaire, 2025)

Fig. 7 shows that 29.3% respondents strongly agree that Lisabi help preserve Yoruba cultural heritage, 53.9% respondents agree, 15.8% respondents are neutral, 1.9% disagree, while 0% respondents strongly disagree.

Discussion of findings

Answer to Research Question 1: How do Westland Polytechnic Students perceive the representation of Yoruba cultural values in Lisabi?

Findings from the study revealed that the majority of Westland Polytechnic students hold a positive perception of the representation of Yoruba cultural values in the biopic movie Lisabi. Respondents who had watched the film observed that it effectively portrayed key elements of Yoruba identity, such as language, traditional attire, ancestral worship, heroic legacy, communal living, and moral values. These cultural symbols were viewed as authentic and reflective of the Yoruba worldview.

Answer to Research Question 2: To what extent does Lisabi accurately depict historical and traditional elements of Yoruba culture?

Furthermore, the study shows that Lisabi is perceived by most Westland Polytechnic students as largely accurate in its depiction of historical and traditional Yoruba culture, though with certain limitations typical of dramatized storytelling. A significant proportion of respondents (approximately 68%) believed that the film portrayed core aspects of Yoruba heritage with cultural fidelity and historical respect. Participants pointed out that the depiction of the Egba kingdom, where Lisabi is said to have lived, aligned with what is historically known about Yoruba socio-political structures including the roles of the Baale, chiefs, and warriors.

Answer to Research Question 3: What impact does Netflix as a digital streaming platform have on the accessibility and appreciation of Yoruba cultural heritage through Lisabi?

The findings of this study also indicates that Netflix, as a global digital streaming platform, has significantly increased accessibility to and appreciation of Yoruba cultural heritage among Westland Polytechnic students through the biopic movie Lisabi. Over 80% of respondents stated that they were able to watch Lisabi solely because it was available on Netflix, a platform they already engage with for other entertainment content. This shows that Netflix serves as a bridge between traditional narratives and digital-age audiences. Students reported that having Lisabi on Netflix made it feel more relevant and "worthy" of attention, suggesting that platform credibility enhances content perception. The ease of access anytime, anywhere contributed to broader viewership beyond the cinema or local TV limitations. A significant number of students also expressed that the film's availability on a global platform provided a sense of pride and visibility for Yoruba culture on the world stage.

Answer to Research Question 4: Does Lisabi enhance students' understanding and appreciation of Yoruba cultural identity?

The study found that Lisabi has a significant positive influence on students' understanding and appreciation of Yoruba cultural identity. A strong majority approximately 78% of respondents agreed that the film helped them learn more about Yoruba history, values, and traditions than they previously knew. This suggests that Lisabi serves not just as entertainment but also as a cultural and educational resource. Respondents highlighted that through the storyline of Lisabi's resistance and leadership, they gained insight into traditional Yoruba principles such as communalism, bravery, respect for elders, reverence for the gods, and societal structure. These values were portrayed in ways that were emotionally engaging and intellectually stimulating. Many students also mentioned that the use of authentic Yoruba language, idioms, chants, and traditional costumes helped deepen their connection to the cultural narrative.

Conclusion

The research concludes that Lisabi is a culturally impactful film that resonates well with its target youth audience. Westland Polytechnic students perceive the movie as an effective medium for promoting Yoruba cultural heritage in a modern, digital format. The study further establishes that platforms like Netflix play a crucial role in making indigenous films accessible, particularly to younger, tech-savvy audiences who may not encounter such content through traditional means.

Thus, Lisabi does not merely entertain; it serves as a cinematic tool for historical reflection, cultural pride, and identity formation. The film illustrates how media can be used strategically to revive and sustain indigenous values in an era dominated by globalization and western media influences.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Promotion of Indigenous Storytelling: Nigerian filmmakers should be encouraged to produce more biopics and culturally rich narratives that reflect indigenous histories and values.

2. Partnerships with Global Platforms: Content creators should pursue strategic collaborations with platforms like Netflix to enhance the global reach of local content.

3. Cultural Education through Film: Tertiary institutions should incorporate indigenous films like Lisabi into general studies or cultural heritage courses to foster greater awareness among students.

4. Government and Stakeholder Support: Policymakers and cultural agencies should fund and support film projects that aim to preserve and promote Nigerian cultural identity.

5. Youth Engagement: Youths should be sensitized on the importance of engaging with indigenous content not just for entertainment, but also for cultural education and identity development.

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