

# Cinematic Narratives And Agricultural Innovation: The Role Of Film In Shaping Public Perceptions Of Food Security In Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *This paper is on cinematic narratives and agricultural innovation: the role of film in shaping public perceptions of food security in Nigeria. Agricultural innovation is vital to addressing food security challenges in Nigeria, yet public perceptions often shape the acceptance and adoption of these innovations. The population of the study are media professionals from Ogun State Chapter of Nigerian Union of Journalists and farmers in Abeokuta South. The study made use of a purposive sampling technique and a sample of 120 respondents were selected for the study using Yamane formula to determine the sample size. The study made use of survey research design and adopted research questionnaire as research instrument. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics involving frequency tables and percentages.. The findings showed that some film portray agriculture as a traditional farming profession while some other film and new media promotes innovation, climate resilience, and food sovereignty. The research highlights the potential for Nigerian filmmakers and media practitioners to collaborate with agricultural stakeholders, fostering more accurate, engaging, and transformative portrayals of food systems. The study recommends that government agencies, NGOs, and agribusinesses should partner with Nollywood producers and screenwriters to create engaging, fact-based narratives that promote agricultural innovation and food security.*

**Keywords:** Agricultural innovation, Cinematic narratives, Film making, Food security, Public perception

## Introduction

The agriculture sector, which supports roughly 50% of the global population (Abegunde, Sibanda and Obi, 2020), operates as the foundation of the global economy. Since it guarantees family food security, lowers rural poverty, and fosters rural development, agriculture is essential to the economic advancement of emerging countries (Dawson et al., 2016). Farmers in developing countries have continued to use antiquated farming methods in recent years, which has led to low crop yields at harvest (Amadi & Raji, 2020). Due mostly to farmers' low knowledge and control over climatic conditions and changes, the unpredictable rainfall pattern has had a substantial impact on agricultural operations (Appiah-Twumasi, et al., 2019). Encouraging farmers worldwide to embrace ecologically sustainable agricultural technologies will enhance their food security and boost their revenue (Awazi and Tchamba, 2018). Both educated and non-educated farmers worldwide have a common aspiration to embrace agricultural innovation (Asfaw & Neka, 2017). Nevertheless, the dissemination of agricultural innovation to farmers, particularly in rural regions, has encountered challenges primarily owing to the scarcity and inefficiency of communication channels (Balasha, 2019).

In Nigeria, food security is still a major problem, with obstacles ranging from ineffective farming methods and climate change to a lack of policies and public disinterest in agriculture. It is well known that mass media, especially movies, have an impact on how people think and behave (Bandura, 2001). As a compelling storytelling medium, film has the ability to shift perceptions of agricultural innovation and promote constructive behavioral changes in farmers, legislators, and consumers. In the past, movies have been used to spur innovation and societal change in a number of fields, such as governance, education, and health (Dovey, 2009). Films can be used as an advocacy strategy because they offer an emotional and visual experience that improves comprehension and memory of important messages (Gerbner, 1998).

Nigeria's thriving film industry, Nollywood, has played a significant role in constructing societal narratives that tackle topics like cultural identity, gender equality, and corruption (Okome, 2007). But nothing is known about how it might affect attitudes about agriculture and food security. Nigeria has been hesitant to embrace modern agricultural techniques, in part because of low literacy, reluctance to change, and traditional farming methods (FAO, 2020). Cultural narratives frequently influence how the general public views agriculture, with many seeing farming as a last-resort occupation (Olawoye, 2016). Films have the power to change these perceptions by portraying agriculture as a successful, inventive, and vital sector of the economy. Globally, agricultural awareness has been raised via the use of fictional and documentary films. For instance, there have been quantifiable effects on agricultural output in India when farmers are taught sustainable methods through community-based cinema (Panda & Kanchi, 2013). According

to Zossou et al. (2009), movies like *Shamba Shape Up* have also been effective in showcasing contemporary farming methods in Kenya. Nigerians' attitudes might be drastically changed by include agricultural themes in Nollywood movies, which would increase support for programs aimed at ensuring food security.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Cultural narratives and public opinion are significantly shaped by the Nigerian film industry, or Nollywood. Nevertheless, the majority of Nollywood movies pay minimal attention to agriculture and food security in favor of subjects like politics, romance, and criminality (Okoro, 2020). In contrast to innovation and economic opportunity, agriculture is frequently portrayed as being connected to poverty, adversity, and rural backwardness (Adesina & Olajide, 2019). This unfavorable representation may deter young people from pursuing farming careers and erode public confidence in agricultural innovations. Exploring how cinematic narratives might be used to modify views of agricultural innovation and food security is necessary given the growing significance of film as a weapon for social change.

Previous studies have shown that cinema can influence behavioral change in areas such as health, education, and governance (Ekwueme & Asogwa, 2017), but less is known about its impact on agricultural development and food security in Nigeria. This study aims to close this gap by investigating the impact of Nollywood and other cinematic works on popular views toward agricultural innovation. It seeks to determine the extent to which cinema may be utilized as an advocacy tool to promote contemporary farming techniques, raise food security awareness, and increase youth participation in agriculture. Addressing this research gap is critical to creating a positive agricultural narrative that promotes national food security and sustainable development.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

To examine how cinematic narratives in Nigerian films influence public perceptions and awareness toward agricultural innovation and food security. The secondary objectives are as follows:

- i. To explore how film influences public understanding, awareness, and behavioral intentions toward agricultural practices and food security.
- ii. To evaluate the effectiveness of film as a medium for communicating agricultural innovation and food-related challenges to diverse Nigerian audiences.

### **Cinematic Narratives**

Cinematic narrative refers to the storytelling techniques used in films to convey a story, emotions, and themes through visual, auditory, and structural elements. It involves the interplay of mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing, sound, and narrative structure to immerse the audience in the story (Bradbury & Guadagno, 2020). Unlike traditional storytelling forms such as literature or theater, film is inherently visual and auditory. The screen becomes a canvas where images and sounds blend seamlessly to create a sensory-rich environment that envelops the viewer. The power of film lies not only in its ability to depict reality but also to construct entirely new worlds, from fantastical realms to historical epochs, drawing audiences into these narrative landscapes with unparalleled immediacy (Bilandzic & Sukalla, 2019).

Furthermore, the cinematic experience extends beyond the screen itself. The darkened theater, the communal act of watching, and the collective emotional responses of the audience all contribute to the unique magic of cinema. Viewers are not passive observers; they are active participants in the narrative journey, sharing in the characters' triumphs and tribulations, laughter, and tears. It is within this communal context that the narrative literature of film takes on a profound significance, as it serves as the thread that weaves together the tapestry of emotions and thoughts shared by those in the audience.

### **Food Security**

Food security, as defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2009), is a complex and multidimensional concept that encompasses the availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability of food supplies. It necessitates guaranteeing that all individuals have access to adequate, safe, and nutritious food to fulfil their dietary requirements and preferences (FAO, 2009). Achieving food security necessitates addressing a variety of interconnected factors, including agricultural productivity, market access, trade policies, social protection, and nutrition education (Pinstrup-Andersen, 2009). Agricultural productivity is a significant determinant of food security. However, agricultural sector in Nigeria faces numerous challenges, including low crop yields, inadequate access to credit, and limited use of modern farming technologies (Ajibade et al., 2013). These challenges contribute to food insecurity by limiting the availability and accessibility of food supplies. Additionally, the infrastructure deficit, particularly in rural areas, hinders the efficient distribution of food, further exacerbating food insecurity (Ajibade et al., 2013). Climate change also poses a significant threat to food security in Nigeria, with droughts, floods, and erratic rainfall patterns affecting agricultural productivity in some Northern region of the country (Ajibade et al., 2013).

### **Farmers' Adoption of Agricultural Innovations**

Throughout the world, over the past several decades, agricultural professionals have been diligently conducting research to emphasize the need of farmers embracing contemporary agricultural methods in order to enhance productivity. This information has been disseminated through many platforms. Nevertheless, in the majority of developing nations, several unresolved obstacles persist regarding the effective dissemination of agricultural innovations to be applied by farmers (Miine, 2023). Empirical research has demonstrated that farmers' adoption of agricultural innovation is crucial for livelihood empowerment, food security and rural development. According to Abubakar et al. (2009), farmers who possess information about agricultural innovation are more likely to have a good attitude and adopt safe methods. Conversely, farmers with a negative attitude are less likely to adopt agricultural innovation. Farmers' level of awareness of agricultural innovation is crucial in determining their adoption of best practices, particularly during the farming seasons when they are preparing to cultivate the land and plant their seeds (Boz, 2014). Farmers in sub-Saharan Africa must engage in several activities to enhance their understanding of agricultural innovation. These activities involve organizing in-person meetings for agricultural extension agents at the community level to enhance their understanding of agricultural innovation and the effective ways to communicate these ideas to farmers. The techniques mentioned by Malhan and Rao (2007) are used to minimize the occurrence of miscommunication between farmers and agricultural specialists. Malawian farmers embrace agricultural innovation as a means to enhance their produce. The majority of farmers were adopting agricultural innovation through a village program, in which extension agents imparted knowledge on how farmers may enhance their farming practices to maximize their crop production. Some farmers were informed about agricultural innovation through a government initiative aimed at assisting farmers by providing them with improved seeds that are resistant to pests and diseases (Tilman et al., 2002).

Farmers persist in embracing agricultural innovation due to the ongoing climatic change they encounter. Farmers acquire knowledge of the adverse effects of climate change through firsthand experience and exposure to media sources (Zheng et al., 2019). Farmers are advised to abandon traditional farming methods and instead enhance their understanding and technical proficiency in agricultural innovation as an alternate approach to address food security concerns.

### **The Agenda-Building Theory**

The agenda-building theory, developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), posits that the media play a significant role in shaping public opinion by setting the agenda for public discourse. According to McCombs and Shaw (1972), the media influence public opinion by highlighting specific issues and framing them in particular ways. In the context of promoting agricultural development and food security in Nigeria, the agenda-building theory can be applied by leveraging the media to shape public discourse on agricultural development and food security. This approach can involve working with the media to highlight the importance of agricultural development and food security, showcase successful agricultural initiatives, and frame agricultural development and food security as critical issues that require urgent attention.

Moreover, the agenda-building theory can be applied to influence policy-making by setting the agenda for policy discussions. This approach can involve working with policy-makers to highlight the importance of agricultural development and food security, showcase successful agricultural initiatives, and frame agricultural development and food security as critical issues that require urgent policy interventions.

### **Empirical Reviews**

The study by Suleiman et al (2021) examined farmers' perceptions of the effectiveness of extension communication channels in promoting agro-forestry technologies in Ekiti state. The majority of respondents were male, educated, married, and had average household size, farm size, and farming experience. The study found that group discussion, radio, television, and extension agents were perceived as effective in promoting agro-forestry technologies. The study recommends strengthening the use of these channels for effective dissemination.

The study by Garba, Shekobagu & Muhammad (2024) found that public relations strategies are crucial for promoting agricultural development and food security in Nasarawa State. The research used the Agenda-Building Theory and the Excellence Theory, and 388 respondents completed questionnaires. The study recommends using traditional and collaborative tactics, targeted outreach, and ongoing evaluation and improvement of strategies.

### **Methodology**

The study made use of a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study are media professionals from Ogun State Chapter of Nigerian Union of Journalists and farmers in Abeokuta South. The study made use of a purposive sampling technique and a sample of 120 individuals were selected from the Ministry of Agriculture in Ogun State using Yamane formula to determine the sample size while 10 media professionals were interviewed using research questionnaire and interview guide as research instruments. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics involving frequency tables and percentages while content analysis was used to analyze the interviews. SPSS version 23.0 software was used for data analysis

### **Data Analysis**

**Table 1: Explore how film influences public understanding, awareness, and behavioral intentions toward agricultural practices and food security**

S/N	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Std Dev
1	Films serve as a powerful medium to raise awareness about agricultural innovations, food production challenges, and the importance of food security	96 (80.0%)	11 (9.2%)	8 (6.7%)	5 (4.2%)	-	3.39	1.93
2	Films can inform audiences about modern farming techniques, climate-smart agriculture, and government initiatives	52 (43.3%)	57 (47.5%)	11 (9.2%)	-	-	3.66	1.64
3	Films can inspire young people to consider agriculture as a viable career path rather than migrating to urban centers	14 (11.7%)	106 (88.3%)	-	-	-	3.88	1.32
4	Film and new media promotes innovation, climate resilience, and food sovereignty	51 (42.5%)	62 (51.7%)	7 (5.8%)	-	-	3.63	1.59

Table 1 shows that 96 (80.0%) of the respondents strongly agree that films serve as a powerful medium to raise awareness about agricultural innovations, food production challenges, and the importance of food security, 11 (9.2%) of the respondents agree to the statement, 8 (6.7%) were undecided while 5 (4.2%) disagreed on the statement. Also, 57 (47.5%) of the respondents agree that films can inform audiences about modern farming techniques, climate-smart agriculture, and government initiatives, 52 (43.3%) of the respondents strongly agree to the statement while 11 (9.2%) were undecided on the statement. In addition, 106 (88.3%) of the respondents agree that films can inspire young people to consider agriculture as a viable career path rather than migrating to urban centers while 14 (11.7%) of the respondents strongly agree on the statement. Furthermore, 62 (51.7%) of the respondents agree that film and new media promotes innovation, climate resilience, and food sovereignty, 51 (42.5%) of the respondents strongly agree to the statement while 7 (5.8%) were undecided on the statement.

**Table 2: The effectiveness of film as a medium for communicating agricultural innovation and food-related challenges to diverse Nigerian audiences**

S/N	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Std Dev
1	Film is useful for the visual demonstration of farming methods, technologies, and best practices	44 (36.7%)	74 (61.7%)	2 (1.7%)	-	-	3.66	1.58
2	Through storytelling and relatable characters, films can evoke empathy and deeper understanding of food-related challenges such as climate change, food insecurity	78 (65.0%)	40 (33.3%)	2 (1.7%)	-	-	3.37	1.51
3	Films, especially those produced in local languages or with subtitles can help in making content relatable and accessible	95 (79.2%)	11 (9.2%)	14 (11.7%)	-	-	3.88	1.71
4	Involving local farmers in film production helps ensure authenticity and	33 (27.5%)	74 (61.7%)	8 (6.7%)	5 (4.2%)	-	3.04	1.85

	give them a platform to share their experiences and innovations							
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Table 2 shows that 74 (61.7%) of the respondents agree that film is useful for the visual demonstration of farming methods, technologies, and best practices, 44 (36.7%) of the respondents strongly agree to the statement while 2 (1.7%) of the respondents were undecided. Also, 78 (65.0%) of the respondents strongly agree that through storytelling and relatable characters, films can evoke empathy and deeper understanding of food-related challenges such as climate change, food insecurity, 40 (33.3%) of the respondents agree to the statement while 2 (1.7%) were undecided. Also, 95 (79.2%) of the respondents strongly agree that films, especially those produced in local languages or with subtitles can help in making content relatable and accessible, 11 (9.2%) of the respondents agree to the statement while 14 (11.7%) were undecided on the statement. Furthermore, 74 (61.7%) of the respondents agree that involving local farmers in film production helps ensure authenticity and give them a platform to share their experiences and innovations, 33 (27.5%) of the respondents strongly agree on the statement, 8 (6.7%) were undecided while 5 (4.2%) of the respondents disagree on the statement.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study showed that film can influence public understanding, awareness, and behavioral intentions toward agricultural practices and food security as it serve as a powerful medium to raise awareness about agricultural innovations, food production challenges, and the importance of food security ( $X = 3.39$ ,  $SD = 1.93$ ), film and new media promotes innovation, climate resilience, and food sovereignty ( $X = 3.63$ ,  $SD = 1.59$ ) and films can inspire young people to consider agriculture as a viable career path rather than migrating to urban centers ( $X = 3.88$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ). The findings also showed film as a useful tool for the visual demonstration of farming methods, technologies, and best practices ( $X = 3.66$ ,  $SD = 1.58$ ), films can evoke empathy and deeper understanding of food-related challenges such as climate change, food insecurity through story telling ( $X = 3.37$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ) and films, especially those produced in local languages or with subtitles can help in making content relatable and accessible ( $X = 3.88$ ,  $SD = 1.71$ ). These findings supports the study of Suleiman et al (2021) who reported that extension communication channels are effective in the dissemination of Agro-forestry Technologies.

### Conclusion

This study is on Cinematic Narratives and Agricultural Innovation: The Role of Film in Shaping Public Perceptions of Food Security in Nigeria. This study is on Cinematic Narratives and Agricultural Innovation: The Role of Film in Shaping Public Perceptions of Food Security in Nigeria. A survey research methodology was adopted for this study and 120 farmers and 10 media professionals were selected for this study. The study showed that film and new media promotes innovation, climate resilience, and food sovereignty. Film can also serve as a useful tool for the visual demonstration of farming methods, technologies, and best practices. The study highlights the potential for Nigerian filmmakers and media practitioners to collaborate with agricultural stakeholders, fostering more accurate, engaging, and transformative portrayals of food systems.

### Recommendations

- i. More awareness and training on agricultural innovation and food security should be created so as to enhance and equip farmers on the use of modern agricultural for effective agricultural productivity.
- ii. Government agencies, NGOs, and agribusinesses should partner with Nollywood producers and screenwriters to create engaging, fact-based narratives that promote agricultural innovation and food security.

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