

Destination Nollywood: A Newspaper Analysis of the Connections between Film and Tourism in Nigeria, 2012-2022

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Abstract : Over the past three decades, Nigeria's film industry has become a global powerhouse, releasing hundreds of films annually and even monthly. Nollywood, a portmanteau of Nigeria and Hollywood as well as Bollywood that was coined by New York Times journalist Norimitsu Onishi in 2002, came to mark the plenitude of filmmaking happening in Lagos from the early 1990s onwards. Following the success of the 1992 straight-to-VHS film *Living in Bondage*, the Nigerian film industry experienced a popular home video boom that gained a huge following in Nigeria, across Africa, and among the global African diaspora. In fact, with an estimated worth of \$6.4 billion as of 2021, Nollywood is nowadays considered the world's second-largest film industry and even the largest in terms of output and popularity. Producing about 2,500 films annually and reaching an estimated audience of over 200 million people worldwide, Nollywood has not only seemingly surpassed Hollywood but also Bollywood with regard to production and consumption size. Due to its commercial success and cultural impact from the early 2010s, Nollywood has often been heralded as a potential driver of Africa's tourism industry. In its 2012 Global Trends Report, the World Travel Market forecasted an increase in GDP in Africa due to tourism in Nollywood filming locations. Additionally, it was expected that the rising popularity of Nollywood would significantly contribute to growth in the leisure sector, drawing both film enthusiasts and business travelers intrigued by the expanding significance of the Nigerian film industry. Still, despite much talk about the potential impact of Nollywood on Nigerian tourism in the past 10 years or so, relatively little is known about Nollywood's association with film tourism and the existing connections between Nigeria's film and tourism industries more generally. Already well over a decade ago, it was observed that there is still a lack of research examining the extent to which film tourism related to Nollywood in Africa has been generated - and to date, this is still largely the case. This paper, then, seeks to discuss the reported connections between Nollywood and tourism and to review the efforts and opportunities related to Nollywood film tourism as suggested in Nigeria's public domain. Based on a content analysis of over 50 newspaper articles and other online available materials, such as websites, blogs and forums, this paper explores the practices and discourses surrounding Nollywood connections with tourism in Nigeria and across Africa over the past ten years. The analysis shows that, despite these high expectations, film tourism related to Nollywood has remained limited. Despite growing government attention and support to Nollywood and its potential for tourism, most state initiatives in this direction have not (yet) materialize - and it very much remains to be seen to what extent 'Destination Nollywood' is really able to come to fruition as long as the structural issues underlying the development of Nigerian film (and) tourism are not sufficiently addressed.

Keywords : film tourism, Nigerian cinema, Nollywood, tourist destination

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