

Information Adequacy and the Marketability of Local Video-films in Tanzania

Edgar Leonard Ngelela

School of Journalism and Mass Communication

University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

ngelela.edgar@udsm.ac.tz

Abstract

This article examines how the availability of information on various platforms has impacted on the marketing of Tanzania's local video-films. Using face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions, the study established that there is little and inadequate information for most Tanzanian video-films. This inadequate availability of information could be one of the contributory factors behind for the decline of Tanzanian video-films viewership. Implicitly, much more needs to be done to further promote the country's local video-films. Moreover, local filmmakers ought to learn how to communicate, what information to post and how to stay in contact with their audience. Furthermore, they ought to learn about important details that should be included in their promotional materials and texts so that they provide adequate information.

Keywords:

Marketing video-films, Marketing movies, Word-of-mouth
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Introduction

Disseminating information is one of the marketing strategies video-film makers and distributors use. Such information must be accessible, adequate, and attractive enough to entice the targeted audience to watch video-films (Finsterwalder, Kuppelwieser, & de Villiers, 2012). Information here means the various contents found in an advertisement, a text and other promotional material used to market video-films. The availability and accessibility of such information today is facilitated by the rapid growth and advancement of technology which is playing a vital role in reaching audience worldwide at an individual level (Araujo, 2020). Implicitly, an individual can access information about a video-film using his/her laptop or smartphone while sitting alone in his/her leaving room. These marketing strategies involve promotional

materials and the media that will be used to communicate the embedded content to the targeted audience.

On the one hand, the promotional materials include trailers, teasers, posters, standees, banners, stickers, covers and sometimes toys, bags, and bottles to mention a few. On the other hand, the media include the various internet platforms, radio and television and word-of-mouth. Moreover, marketers and journalists have been acquiring special skills and specialisation, respectively, to improve the value of their work. As a result, the content of these promotional materials is becoming increasingly much more attractive, adequate, professional and with a creative touch. Consequently, Hollywood exemplifies the effect of adequate information about its upcoming films on various platforms.

Argument

Similarly, Tanzania has been attempting to use technologies presently at its disposal to market its video-films. These video-films refer to both the movies that use film technology and those that use both analogue and digital video system technology. Considering the reality on the ground, the question always on the ready availability and the composition of the information so packaged. Thus, the primary questions was How accessible, adequate and attractive enough is the marketing information to entice more audience? This is a key question this article attempts to answer.

Disseminating information as a marketing strategy in Tanzania started as early as the 1920s during the colonial period when the country was under the British rule as a protectorate following Germany's defeat in the First World War in 1918 (hence ceding control over its German East African territories comprising then Tanganyika, Burundi and Rwanda) up to the 1980s in post-independence Tanzania (the United republic having been formed after Zanzibar and Tanganyika forged a Union in 1964). However, the information available was mostly for foreign video-films. This information was mostly communicated through print media particularly newspapers and posters as at that time many Tanzanians did not own a television set. Even though the Zanzibar archipelago started accessing state TV in 1972, on Tanzania Mainland television did not emerge as part of a national framework until the 1990s. Nevertheless, through the Tanzanian Film Company (TFC) and Audio-Visual Institute (both now

defunct) information on local video-films started emerging from the 1970s (Mwakalinga 2010). Still filmmakers and marketers continued relying heavily on newspapers and subsequently the radio and television.

It was until the local video-film *Girlfriend* (Tyson 2002) that contemporary commercial video-films were realised, and this is the time marketing did its job. As a marketing strategy, newspapers, radio, and television were used effectively. Moreover, the use of celebrities such as the singer Khalid Mohamed also known as *TID*, rappers such as Ambwene Allen Yessayah alias *A.Y. Juma Mohamed Mchopanga* alias *Jay Moe*, Gwamaka Mjuni Kaihula alias *Crazy GK* in the video-film created a big marketing momentum. Different stories emerged for use in newspapers, discussions conducted on radio and television and interviews with these artists. This marketing strategy also promoted word-of-mouth that allowed a good number of Tanzanians to watch the movie. After *Girlfriend*, many of the subsequent local video-films such as *Sandra* (Mtitu, 2003) and *Dilemma* (Tyson, 2003) continued to apply some of the marketing strategies used by the video-film.

With various advancements in technology, many people in the world today (Tanzanians inclusive) have witnessed modern marketing and distribution strategies through multiple internet platforms including social media through which people can receive information and watch video-films. These include IMDb, Netflix, YouTube and Amazon. Impliedly, the accessibility of information has been highly improved, hence making it is now up to the marketing department of the video-film to exploit such opportunities.

Scholars have addressed marketing and different ways through which it could be done effectively in the current era. Araujo (2020) argues that with the presence of various internet platforms, video-film industries from all over the world can now survive without only having to deal with big distribution companies. With the advanced technologies, independent video-film makers and studios only ought to upload the movie and with good marketing strategies, the information and the movie could reach many globally. Supporting Araujo, Sawadogo (2017) further explains that multi-channel promotion platforms such as YouTube, Vimeo, Netflix and Amazon allow marketers to upload various promotional information materials in form of texts, images, and trailers that the audience can easily access. However, Araujo (2020) contends that the challenge was finding a receptive online audience. Looking at the number of people accessing

internet resources and browsing using other electronic gadgets, especially in African countries such as Tanzania, begs the question regarding whether most of the video-film fans could access them whenever they wanted, especially those living in rural areas.

Also, considering the various strategies used in marketing video-films, Chen (2021) called for the adoption of the PEST model. The model looks at the *Politics* of the country (this is also associated with the formation of policies), the *Economic* Status of the individual citizens (fans and their ability to buy or go to the movies), *Social* influences (educational levels of the citizens, religion, and culture), and the *Technological* aspects that could affect business. The model could help evaluate areas that need more focus and improvements. This apt statement justifies the conducting of more research on the PEST model in the context of Tanzania, it could shed more light on various challenges that if mitigated, local video-film marketing will bring more competition to the market.

This qualitative study aimed to filling that gap by discussing the challenges of availing information and how the video-films are being reported in various media in Tanzania as one of the marketing strategies that could help in the promotion of the video-films. Observing what these scholars have said it is inevitable that adequate information on myriad platforms. Moreover, the internet and its multi-channel promotion platforms can no longer be ignored. This aligns with Finsterwalder, Kuppelwieser and de Villiers (2012), who argue that not too much or little information needs to be placed out there to avoid the risk of over-exposing the plot. Considering the marketing even before production can facilitate the proper utilisation of a myriad multi-channel platforms. In this regard, Araujo (2020) contends that the internet and its audience helps to reach more people in the urban areas and towns both locally and internationally.

Theoretical underpinning

Guided by Katz and Blumler's (1974) Uses and gratification theory, the study determined the availability and adequacy of information against creating expectations and later achieving satisfaction. Moreover, when the audience achieves satisfaction, then a key ingredient of social interaction is achievable, which also promotes word-of-mouth. The audience discusses

how satisfied they were with the marketing strategies used and, eventually, the video-films. However, when they were dissatisfied, they might decide not to talk about the movie or talk about it in negative terms. Implicitly, getting positive reviews about the availability of the information and advertisements including trailers are very vital when it comes to marketing the video-films. Furthermore, audiences would have an opportunity to choose video-films that would satiate their gratification.

Methods

Using face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions, the study generated data from a sample size of sixty (60) respondents drawn from Dar es Salaam and Mwanza. The population comprised video-film directors, producers, actors, actresses, vendors, and librarians, on the one hand, and the audience, on the other hand, who included the working class, students, housemaids and housewives. The study qualitative used semi-structured in-depth interviews as the primary data collection tool. For flexibility during the interviews, the study used open-ended questions. In all, the study conducted 40 interviews and held two focus group discussions (FGDs) each with 10 (10) members. One FGD was conducted in Mwanza and the other in Dar es Salaam. The FGD in Mwanza comprised housemaids whereas the one in Dar es Salaam was composed of students drawn from various colleges. The housemaids happened to be foremost watchers of video-films whereas the students liked to be entertained through watching video-films and had the time and resources. The two data collection instruments—interview and focus group discussions guides—facilitated the getting detailed information about the participants' opinions, attitudes, and feelings on the Tanzanian video-film industry and how the marketing strategies could be improved to increase marketability (Edwards & Holland 2013).

Findings and Discussion

Internet and its platforms

Before going to watch a certain video-film, people nowadays have prior information about it. These include the title of the film, trailers, release dates, duration, the director's name and, at times, his/her experience if not known, the cast and at times even the crew. Nevertheless, not all audiences have reached this high awareness level. The number of

audiences that are aware currently is massive when compared to the 1990s. When this information is unavailable on the internet, it is a sign that a huge number of audiences would not know the existence of produced video-films and consequently it may not reach them.

The study conducted between 2016 and 2019 found that most of the participants investigated relied heavily on various internet platforms to get diverse information on video-films before watching and after watching them. As a result, their eagerness in watching some of the upcoming video-films increased as they were excited to watch them. Some of the platforms that most of the participants included YouTube, NETFLIX, Show box, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, IMDb and WhatsApp. Apparently, nearly all the participants did not appreciate the promotions of Tanzania's video-films over the internet platforms, arguing that they were poor and inadequate. Being poor meant not well-done for the audience's expectations whereas inadequate could mean little and unsatisfactory information.

YouTube emerged to be one of the platforms that the Tanzanian video-film makers and marketers used. This platform attracted the posting of trailers, teasers, and full-length video-films over the years by many filmmakers and marketers all over the world. In fact, many of Tanzania's locally made video-films have largely been undermined. Comparatively, many locally made video-films produced over the years, only a few that either have a teaser, a trailer or a full-length video-film posted on YouTube. The investigation further revealed that most of the video film production and marketing companies did not even have a YouTube channel and only a few artists (actors, actresses and crew). Moreover, those with the YouTube channel not utilising them sufficiently because the majority lacked skills to utilise fully the website to market their works (Sanga, 2015). Failure to sufficiently upload their films on social media including YouTube. A huge number of audiences cannot access the trending information. As a result, people failed to get either the information or the attraction to see the locally made video-films as they do not know of their existence.

Moreover, some of the members of the audience through YouTube also accessed more information associated with the quality of the video-films, which included the sound quality, image quality and even the quality of the content itself through the trailers and teasers. Lacking these promotion

materials on these platform deprived the audience of a selection and, hence, they were restricted to choosing from what was available, mostly foreign video-films.

Besides YouTube, platforms that the Tanzanian video-film audience currently use to access information on video-films include Facebook, Twitter, NETFLIX, Show-box, and IMDb. Just like YouTube, there was little or no information on many of the locally made video-films. Although these platforms have been revolutionary in sending information to the audience and attracting them to watch the new releases, these platforms have not been successful enough in attracting audiences to watch the locally made video-films in Tanzania as the filmmakers and marketers had yet to use the platforms adequately.

Addressing these tendencies of the local video-film makers and marketers have gone further depending on the information from the journalist. Implicitly, Tanzanian video-film makers and marketers do not prepare either a guide or a press release document; rather they implore journalists to tell them unprofessionally about their video-film. In fact, most journalists do not have requisite skills to report or cover specialised stories on movies and, hence, fail to capture key details when writing or publishing information on video-films. Furthermore, journalists capable of covering, writing, or reporting specialised stories about locally made video-films is like looking for a needle in a haystack. In consequence, many reports, shows, and programmes neglected vital information that contributes to attracting more members of the audience to watch a video-film or be more informed about a certain video-film and the people involved. On these grounds, Chen (2021) argues that studying the politics, economy, social influences (culture and religion) and technology of a country helps to promote video-films. Also, the filmmakers and marketers ought to be conversant with the professional aspects and political aspects within and outside the country to determine the best ways to market their local video-films and survive the market competition.

Reporting on the radio and television

Reporting and providing information via radio and television is another marketing strategy that filmmakers and marketers use. Video-film makers and marketers use teasers, trailers, behind-the-scenes, directors' commentaries, discussions, and interviews to promote their video-films

through the television. Through the radio, they presented the directors' commentaries, discussions, and interviews. These promotions could be paid programmes, adverts, and other arrangements. Nonetheless, these practices remain largely uncommon for Tanzania's video-film makers and marketers. Currently, it was rare to see Tanzania's video-film trailers and other promotions on local television because paying for these trailers, adverts and promotional programmes has been too expensive for Tanzanian marketers and video-film makers to afford these strategies. When investigated, it emerged that the local video-film makers and marketers did not have a budget to pay for TV promotions.

For radio, paying for the interviews and other promotions was an expensive and a fearful endeavour for the local video-films makers. As a result, there has been limited use of such promotions on radio and television. The only promotions that have been highly publicised were only those local video-films that have won an award at very famous festivals such as Grammys or Oscars. Such limited use of radio and television platforms stemmed from fear of not recouping the money injected into video-film production and promotion. Jerrick's (2013) study found that using the television was one of the effective strategies that enticed many audiences to watch the movie, but one had to be confident in his or her movie. On the other hand, placing other products gaining money and favour required the promotion the video film was also another strategy that can be used (Sharma, Nicolau, & Mas, 2022).

Information through other local video-films

As a marketing strategy and a way to send information to the audience, Tanzania's video-film makers and marketers have been using other local video-films by providing information on other new releases by placing trailers of other newly released or coming soon local video-films to make their audience aware. A CD or DVD package would have 5 - 15 trailers before the commencement of the movie. The strategy aimed to make the trailers a must-watch them that must be forward after being carefully executed to effectively navigate in selecting a desired movie to watch. Apparently, knowing about the new releases one had to be a bona fide fan and a frequent watcher of local video-films to see the trailers. In other words, if a person stops watching local video-films, then they would not see the new trailers.

Information through the cinema/theatre halls

Cinema halls are built and designed in such a way that marketers and filmmakers can advertise their video-film even if they would not be premiered at the cinema hall they are advertised. As a marketing strategy usually by showing the trailers before the main movie starts, using posters and standees around the waiting lounge and ticket areas, and using billboards and other promotional materials that could help market the video-films. Filmmakers and marketers use cinema halls because the audience believes that most video-films shown in cinema halls are carefully selected to generate a good profit. Implicitly, the selection criteria may include quality and attractive information packaging capable of generating a profit. As such, whoever shows their movie must make sure the video-film is outstanding.

Regardless of the advantages, the practice of watching locally made video-films' posters, standees and trailers had been infrequent in local cinema halls such as the Century Cinemax because some of the filmmakers and markers fear they could not recoup the money they were going to spend. Also, some feared people would not watch their movies. After all, they dread their movies would not be good enough for such an audience aware of what entails a good movie. To promote and showcase their video-films on such platforms meant having good quality and attractive content that would entice the audience to watch the video-film. In other words, having a good and well-informed cast and crew is crucial in marketing, as Kroll (2020) suggests.

Word-of-mouth

Word-of-mouth (WoM) is one of those marketing strategies that reach many people in a short period. Moreover, it is one of the trusted methods as the person who gives the other person information about a certain movie is close to that person and, thus, they know what kind of tastes would attract his colleague. This method is a trusted one because the persons making referrals to a video-film could be family members, relatives, friends, neighbours, and colleagues. This method would allow the filmmakers to create attractive content in the video-film and the audience would recommend the movie to their colleagues through word-of-mouth particularly if the video-film attracted them in the first place.

What the marketers did was to encourage word-of-mouth. This is supported by Jerry Vasilatos who was quoted by Caldwell (2005) saying

that he found that most opportunities came from the word-of-mouth. Impliedly, word-of-mouth provided many opportunities not only for the video-films but also for the talents involved. Liu (2006), and Rawal and Saavedra (2017) confirm that word-of-mouth is one of the strongest and most effective marketing strategies. Rawal and Saavedra (2017) contend that WOM is, at times, even stronger than using stars when it comes to generating revenues associated with the number of people who watch the film. However, when the video-film is not well-received, the same WOM could be used to destroy the movie and reduce the credibility of involved talents a mark that could stay for a long time before being accepted and trusted again.

Evidently, Tanzanian audiences use referrals which is like the word-of-mouth because some of the members of the local audience did not believe in themselves to look for a good movie and, therefore, rely on their colleagues and friends who are video-film fans to choose a good video-films to watch. Moreover, some depend on video-film vendors and librarians to propose a good video-film for them to watch. These vendors and librarians have to watch the video-films beforehand to recommend them to their customers, which is a little tricky as they need to know their customers' tastes and likes to propose video-films; otherwise, they would keep on proposing video-films their customers did not like and, hence, lose them in the process. Word-of-Mouth also depended much on other platforms as these members who recommend the video-films to others tend to collect information from the internet and many other places for them to recommend a movie with adequate information.

Moreover, when a video-film is good it would trend over the various media, and everyone would be talking about it. One of the greatest strategies the audiences (Including the Tanzanian audience) could use as a clue is to ensure that a certain released video-film is good, for example, *Going Bongo* (Ronalds, 2015), *Mdundiko* (Kabirigi 2014), *Homecoming* (Shamte, 2016), *T-Junction* (Shivji, 2017), *Kiumeni* (Marwa 2017). On the other hand, a poor video-film would generate negative views and recommendations and, thus, prompt the potential audience not to watch it. Thus, focusing on some of the things that would result in people sharing information about a video-film through word-of-mouth requires a movie to be self-selling. Impliedly, the story ought to be good and well-written, with the content well-thought out. In this regard, the production

must be outstanding with every other detail including issues of quality. Yet, many of the Tanzanian video-films were not self-selling. As a result, they were too difficult to market through word-of-mouth.

Adequacy of information available

Generally, marketing materials used in promoting local video-films help to determine whether they have adequate information for the audience. As a marketing and communication strategy, video-film makers and marketers often provide various information about their video-films with the intent to attract the audience, connect with them and even create a loyal audience. This information includes identifying the directors of the video-films, producers, main actors and actresses, release dates, planned budget, qualifications, and résumés of some of the important personnel such as directors, producers and the main characters. The information goes as far as having teasers and snaps from the locations during productions to inform and attract potential audiences. It emerged that most of them were movie watchers. The researcher further found that the locally made video-films generally had inadequate information as they lacked most of the necessary details including missing the name of the directors, producers and sometimes even the release date.

In this regard, both Gao et al. (2019) and Gaenssle, Budzinski and Astakhova (2018) underscore the importance of revealing the director's name and some of the other talents including actors. Through experiences, the audience has with the talents on display in their brilliant previous works, they are bound to trust them and watch their future video-films. Moreover, some of the video-film makers did not even remember when their video-film started production and the date they released it. Furthermore, the researcher found that some of the Tanzanian video-films that had little information only had it because it was as a requirement for the video-films to either participate in the festivals or broadcast by a TV station. In other words, most of the local filmmakers and marketers lacked skills and were unaware of what information was vital in providing to their audience. These factors forced Tanzanian video-filmmakers to rely on journalists as a result. Also, many of the journalists lacked the adequate skills and specialities in writing or reporting about video-film field convincingly.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the challenges on the availability and adequacy of the provided information on Tanzania's video-films to create awareness pertaining to their release, who is involved and what were they all about. The study has further discussed the coverage and reportage of the information in various media as one of the strategies that could help to promote local video-films when executed well. Also, the information about the local video-films is not well-spread for various reasons, which include limited funds to market and airing of their trailers in media such as TV, lack of skills to use social media to market the same, inadequate information provided about video-films and the use of unqualified personnel incapable of performing tasks. To rescue the situation, Tanzanians working in the video-film industry must change their attitudes and open up to receiving more knowledge and information from others. If the purpose is to prosper, then they must learn from more knowledgeable and experienced people. These experienced heads would share their experience and help local filmmakers and marketers to prepare press releases that have adequate information for the journalists to use. Moreover, local filmmakers have to learn how to communicate, what information to post and how to stay in contact with their audience. Furthermore, they have to learn about important details that should be included in their promotional materials and texts so that they provide adequate information. In addition, they must stop dreading the advancement of technology and, thus, had to adopt and utilise promptly the internet multi-channel platforms to market their products worldwide. Journalists should also start learning the skills of writing and reporting for the film field. Thus, it is time for Tanzanian journalists to venture into specialisation to have skills for the fields in which they are writing or reporting instead of general reporting.

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