

SCI-FI FILM GENRE: A CATALYST FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study delves into the application of science fiction films in Nigeria as a medium for promoting science and technological ideology to induce development in the country. The objectives are to seek out science fiction stories in the Nigerian film industry, find out if the science fiction genre in Nollywood portrays the societal approach and importance attached towards science and technological progress, and to discover if the available science fiction stories produced in Nigeria serves as a catalyst for inducing the populace towards science and technological development. The study uses the Edutainment theory, methodology for the study is textual analysis of Nigerian sci-fi films, and interviews and focus groups involving science fiction related Nollywood offerings that have been produced in the last 15 years. The findings reveal that the science fiction genre films in Nigeria are few and has not established dominance compared to other genres. Most of them have limited capacity to inspire the young generation of film fans towards science and technology based careers except one. The study recommends that policies tilted towards the genre should be introduced and that technological companies should be engaged and encouraged to become involved in such productions.

Keywords: Science fiction, Genre, Innovation, Edutainment

Introduction

The Nigerian film industry has been a major contributor to the Gross domestic product of her economy, contributed to national development in many aspects and also gained admiration among other film producing countries worldwide (Ilukwe, 2025). Various genres contribute to the growth of film industries and it is vital to see if a genre that is related to tangible, visible innovative and development culture like the sci-fi genre thrives and positively impacts the Nigerian society. National development can be a process of reconstruction and growth in the

various dimensions of a nation, expansion of its industries, as well as cultural institutions which includes the development of its individuals (Adekola and Uzoagu, 2022). Film, as a media tool consists of genres which contributes to the process and are instrumental in fostering development strides of a country. The science fiction genre has been evident in various mediums of storytelling such as novels, Graphic novels, animated cartoons, television series and cinema. This study pores over the potential and possibility of stories related to the genre as an agency to boost technological development in Nigeria because a country with a production culture especially in the scientific and technological sphere, stands out among other nations. The likes of China, Germany, The US, Japan to mention but a few, sit at the top of the helm of affairs worldwide due to their consistent growth and maintenance of a steadfast culture in the science and tech industry. Examples of such situations is evident in the first science fiction film that was made in 1902 by George milles known as A trip to the moon and can be said to predict the future of space travelling. Remarkably, the Japanese sci-fi Animation films has greatly influenced the design and development of real world technological products, innovations in robotics, computer graphics as well as digital interfaces made in japan. Through film, Science fiction stretches the possibility of real science and serves as an inspiration for real scientific research and developments (Stephan, 2023). It is needful to see if there are films that reflect and tilt towards science and tech in the country, if the themes are properly placed and the available stories can promote a science and technological development ideology among the public.

The issue of a country such as Nigeria not being a producing country but more of a consuming nation cannot be overemphasized. With so much available human and mineral resources, an innovative mentality, especially in science and technological advancement will undeniably stir the nation towards achieving greater heights. The fictitious stories told by the Nigerian medium to some extent reflect the cultural activities and the general mindset of the nation's audiences one way or the other. Popular culture combines perceptions of technological progress with contemporary hopes and fears (Bukcup, 2016). It is needful for scholars to embark on such studies as this to make valuable judgements about the path taken by film culture in Nigeria since cultural policy is involved in the regulation and management of culture and in particular, the administration of those institutions that produce and govern the form and content of cultural products (Ilukwe, 2025).

Objectives

To seek out science fiction stories in the Nigerian film industry

To find out if the science fiction genre in Nollywood portrays the societal approach and importance attached towards science and technological progress

To discover if the available science fiction stories produced in Nigeria are capable of inspiring and inducing its populace towards science and technological careers, investments and development.

Statement of the Problem

The genres that dominate the film industry in some way reflects the societal mindset and ideologies which set the trends in a culture. Since science and technological advancement cannot be overemphasized by societies all around the world, it is necessary to study how the story telling narratives synonymous with this genre is applied in the Nigerian film industry. The problem of this study deals with examining sci-fi stories in Nigerian films, so as to notice how the themes regarding the country's science and technological culture is depicted and if it inspires creativity and innovation which can drive the populace towards improvement in its various technological and scientific fields. The study points at sci-fi storytelling as a medium to inspire an industrial revolution through ideological sensitization and awareness via film as, the current growth of Nollywood gives room for an increase in the varieties of genres available for its audiences, and so drifting towards sci-fi genre should be a useful endeavor (Ilukwe,2025). How these genres emerge to an extent, is determined by the ideological and socio-cultural factors dominant among the among the populace. Currently, in Nollywood, the dominating genres like comedy, drama, romance, epic, so far, reflects the general psyche of the population.

Literature Review

History of Science Fiction Genre in Film

Science fiction in cinema has evolved enormously over the decades in western and east Asian countries and hopefully, if proper steps are taken, this genre may experience such metamorphosis in the Nigerian film industry. From the French virtual cinema website known as Cinecreatis, a run-down of its evolution is given chronologically in different eras. Just like the different film movements and emergence of film theories along

the years, Science fiction is rooted in the social and political concerns of the times.

1940s-1960s: This is the period when science fiction films became a major genre and was often associated with the fear of nuclear war, rapid technological advances as well as the danger of misuse of technological innovations. This was the era of the 2nd world war and other wars which involved the intense and immense use of war machinery and the atomic bomb. It emphasizes on the dangers of nuclear war, the fear of cold wars, totalitarian regimes and the exploration and conquest of space.

1970s-1990s: Deals with the application of technological advancement in film production such as special effects and increased process of probing of philosophical and existential themes. It reveals more complex socio-cultural philosophical issues such as identity, consciousness, Introspective themes and isolation of the individual amidst technological advancements gradually transforming society beyond the control of man. The issue of hyper-reality emerges, where individuals become infused into visual imagery, augmented reality, technological designs that blurs the line between what is real and what is hyperreal.

2000s-til date:Comprises of computer generated imagery known as CGI, advances in 3D, digital special effects, and more attention given to environmental messages, Artificial intelligence, Surveillance and the ethical implications of technological innovations. It shows the threat of AI and robots regarding employment as well as job markets being under threat.

From the eras mentioned above, it is understood that each period indicates the kind of technological innovations birthed which is also synonymous with the socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-economic conditions experienced in their societies. These conditions bring about the emergence of themes that make up sci-fi genres.

Sci-Fi Genre as Culture

A straightforward description of genre is collective conventions among stories within a body of aesthetic works (Bredvig, 2018). They exist in art culture, only in so far as the public in a social group accepts, affirms and put into effect the rubrics that constitute them. The sci-fi genre can thrive only in a conducive environment that encourages it. Genre conventions suits societal situations and current popular culture among audiences. It is blended in current circumstances that describe the trajectory of the society. It in a way, mirrors the cultural progression and

evolvment of a group of people. Science and technology forms part of culture and the changes it brings can be seen as an enabling element of societal progress and along with the new economic social freedoms which spread economic virtues and political values (Buckup, 2016). A genre thrives when it is synonymous with public narratives, trends and ideology. Science fiction often serves as inspiration for real scientific research and developments and sometimes the language of fiction can shape our thinking and approach to scientific investigations, innovations and progress (Stephens, 2023). It is necessary to understand how narratives in Nigeria reflects on our collective approach towards scientific and technological development. The types of genres available in the industry represents what is ideologically dominant and what society induces (Ilukwe, 2025).

The edutainment theory is suitable for this study regarding application of (media) fictional stories to create awareness about societal issues and individual behavioral change. It involves implementing contents to both entertain and educate so as to increase audience knowledge and awareness about issues (Sobah & Brahim, 2024). This theory portrays how media can drive cognitive and emotional development while boosting creativity and imagination. The audiences can be enlightened on the benefits of scientific and technological growth in society and encouraged to have a more participatory approach or enable them develop interest in the sector (Lin et al, 2013). The purpose of such programming is to contribute to the process of intentional and directional societal awareness and transformation. The sci-fi film as a genre should not be regarded as just a place for outlandish escapism because it holds a significant position in contemporary culture and its influence and impact can be revealed in the direction of some real scientific and technological advances (Stephen, 2023). Research has shown that experimental studies empirically validate how fictional films improve students understanding of scientific concepts and can create lasting mental images of concepts that are correlated to the underlying scientific theory (Lin et al, 2013).

Films and National Development

Ilukwe, 2025 elaborated on how the film industry serves as a means of national development in his paper titled: *Nigerian film industry and national development* in the Advanced Journal of Theatre and Film Studies. The problem involves the film industry and national development, making use of the modernization theory. It also looks at aspects related with the diverse angles from which Nollywood

contributes to national development, areas which the potentials of the industry in Nigeria can be fully maximized amidst the various obstacles to national development. The methodology used is qualitative research and involves the application of content analysis of selected Nollywood films as well as interviews in gathering qualitative data. The findings show that the Nigerian film industry is a potential socio-economic and cultural powerhouse that can bring about significant and sustainable developments in key areas of the nation when properly harnessed. It concludes that key players in the socio-political, socio-cultural and socio-economic domains should prioritize the needs of the film industry improve the economy. This study aligns with the research of Ilukwe,2025 since it also involves the development of the country's economy through the film medium. It differs from subsequent literatures of Rahman, Sayed, Mazumdar, 2025 as well as Lin, Tsai, Chien, Chang, 2013 which concentrates on inducing student learning through sci-fi films towards improved technological and innovative subjects.

Rahman, Sayed, Mazumdar, 2025 wrote on Film-centric science communication: Striking a balance between accuracy and visual storytelling in the open access research journal. It looks at the problem of how science is communicated to the public regarding possible distortion of scientific facts when making films. Its objectives emphasize the authenticity of content of science in sci-fi film production, the impact and proven effectiveness of these films for public appreciation and understanding of science. Their study is a bit similar to Lin et al ,2013 which shows that sci-fi films play a vital role in making students develop interests and curiosity about science and scientific knowledge and also a good instrument for teaching science topics. A mixed method approach was applied, using the quantitative method within the scope of eTwinning project, where the Weak experimental design was used which involves a focus group. 54 student participants were selected but not randomly, an issue on astronomy was presented and a pre and post-test format was used and scores were obtained. For the qualitative aspect, open ended questions were asked after the participating students were made to watch a sci-fi film related to astronomy and the resulting data acquired. The findings for both qualitative and quantitative revealed that the students made varied decisions based on the different approaches. The conclusion showed that group of the students who watched the film before answering open ended questions related to astronomy showed more perspective, curiosity and interests in embarking on the astronomical tasks before them based on the results more than the other group. The study proves

useful to this paper since the goal is to promote sci-fi genre to encourage such creative and innovative traits among audiences and young people (mostly students) form a large part of film spectators.

Lin et al, 2013 in the Eurasia journal of mathematics, science and technology education showed similarities to the study of Rahman, Sayed, Mazumdar, 2025 in their publication titled the Effects of science-fiction film on the technological creativity of middle school students. The research purpose deals with exploring the effects of learning activity based on sci-fi films on the technological creativity of middle school students. The holistic-analytic cognitive style and the verbal-visual cognitive style was applied as the methodology. A quasi-experimental design was used which included 132 students. The quantitative method was applied with 69 students engaged in product design activities after watching a sci-fi film while the other 63 engaged in product design activities without watching a sci-fi film. Analysis of covariance was used to analyze data. The study concluded that sci-fi films can stimulate the student's technological creativity and induces proper learning activities showing the stimulating effect of sci-fi films on student interest in science and technological creativity. The study of Lin et al, 2013 varies in theory and methodology to that of Rahman, Sayed, Mazumdar, 2025 and slightly in the aspect of student learning ability but still similar regarding sci-fi films as a tool to inspire and increase science and technological interest among the young populace which forms the largest group of film audiences.

Methodology

For this research, the qualitative analysis approach is applied because it meets the research encompasses laying emphasis on the meanings that are instinctive or intuitive (Asemah, 2017). It deals with subjective valuing and researcher construction which underlines the procedure of subjective introspection in noting down what is detected from the data assimilated. The aim is to produce a revealing, intelligible description and perspectives based on and consistent with a thorough study of the circumstances. According to Meyer, the researcher draws on various analytic tools to give a prolific position on the data contextually analyzed. The design applies a textual analysis approach since it deals with film as a form of visual communication and is also associated with culture. The Population for the study consists of 6 popular Nigerian science fiction films in the last 15 years which are: Ratnik, Kajola, Sector Zero, Day of destiny, Hello Rain, and Makemation based

on purposive (criterion) sampling technique since the films selected specifically fits the study.

Nigerian Science Fiction Film Analysis

Ratnik directed by Dimeji Ajibola in 2020. The film was inspired by the Russian future infantry combat system also known as Ratnik. themes it explores are power, identity and the circumstances of humanity in a dystopic world. Apocalyptic era of world war 3. It also features some scientific and technological innovations that are what considering such as: Biometric technology is shown due to the abuse of a chemical substance and depicts zombies, advanced military and surveillance technology such as drones, DNA analysis and retinal scans used for identification purposes and security, AI and advanced robotics showing a female android, a dystopian world, exoskeleton suits and sophisticated firearms are seen in the plot. The technological innovations portrayed are already familiar to viewers and barely contribute ideas which are new and carries little capability of inspiring viewers to consider new innovations or encourage a career in science and technological innovation. It majorly feels like an imitation of a Hollywood story.

Day of Destiny: This film was directed by Akay Mason and Agbosi Ogba in 2021 and involves two brothers who embark on creating a time machine in order to travel back in time to enable their parents make the right connections to become rich. The film doesn't really showcase intriguing scientific or technological innovations that are noteworthy. It combines magic realism with science fiction showing the strong influence of Afrofuturism in Nigerian productions (Acuff, 2019). It is a mixture of the comedy genre, and turned out more of a comedy with little evidence of sci-fi influence in the film.

Hello Rain: directed by CJ Obasi and released in 2018. It is a short sci-fi film mixed with traditional African magic. It is set in a futuristic Nigeria and happens to be an adaptation of Nnedi Okafors literary work known as Hello Moto. The story is about a female scientist who produced wigs which carries extra ordinary abilities. The wigs were produced by a mixture of magic (juju) and technology. In this film, magic realism is combined with technology and has an afrofuturistic narrative (Acuff, 2019). However, it doesn't really offer much regarding scientific or technological innovations. It touches on the dangers of combining modern science with African extra mundane practices. It lays more emphasis on Afrofuturism.

Kajola: directed by Niyi Akinmolayan in 2010 is Nollywood's first recognized sci-fi film and it is a futuristic dystopian film mixed with the action genre. It makes use of CGI to drive the narrative but did not succeed in giving the Nigerian audiences the needed satisfaction. The themes explored in the film are: class struggle, the dilemma of war, insecurity, technological advancement and social inequality in Lagos which has been destroyed and desolated by civil war. The movie portrays the social divide in society as the elites reside on the highland and the haves live on the Lagos mainland. The scientific and technological innovations observed are: A dystopian Lagos state that is militarily technologically driven. The film did not enjoy box office success as the likes of *Ratnik* and *Makemation* but received mixed reviews. This may be due to exhibition and distribution issues at the time. It however paved the way for other science fiction films in Nollywood. The scientific and technological ideas are similar to what Hollywood sci-fi films already made available and did not reveal any real ingenuity regarding science and technology or inspire audiences towards that arena.

Sector Zero: directed by Banji Oyemeja in 2018 offered themes linked with societal control, surveillance and artificial intelligence which is set in a futuristic Nigeria invaded by aliens and showcases a combination of African culture and technology. It focuses majorly on the impact and consequences of technological advancement in the society. The scientific and technological elements visible in the film are: Cyber warfare, surveillance technology and artificial intelligence. It raises questions concerning control and privacy and computer hacking. It copies the usual dystopian Hollywood sci-fi narratives and does not inspire or portray potential African ingenuity in the science and technological sphere.

Makemation: was released in April 2025, directed by Micheal Ama Psalmist Akinrogunde. It stars Richard Mofe Damijo, Shaffy. For some reason, it is recognized as Africa's first feature film which is specifically based on tech and AI. Interestingly, it happens to be the most successful science and technology related film not just in Nollywood but in Africa as a whole. It grossed over 32 million naira in its first week. It triggered conversations regarding youth empowerment and the usefulness of technology and education. It was even exhibited at the 2024 global artificial intelligence summit which was held in Saudi Arabia, as well as Kenya innovation week. The Themes include: technological advancement against cultural identity, the digital divide or

digital inequality, and application of AI as a culture. It hints on the pressure of tradition against progress and depicts the various complexities of embracing technology and at the same time, preserving one's culture and tradition. It places interest on the relevance of STEM education and innovation among young Nigerians. It also looks at the unfamiliarity and fear of AI in an African environment, the possibilities and the potential challenges. The film attracted positive reviews, critical acclaim due to its ingenuity. The narrative truly inspires audiences towards science and technological progress for both aspiring scholars as well as industry stakeholders.

Findings

While Makamation succeeded, Day of destiny's mixture of comedy and sci-fi was not very effective based on interview and focus group responses. The findings show that Nollywood offers very few films related to the sci-fi genre in a span of 2 decades. Many Nigerian sci-fi films are based on dystopian setting which does not show science in a positive light. Technology is associated with war, the extra mundane (juju) in most of the plots of the films mentioned above. Most of the storylines doesn't really contribute ideas which have not been seen before and maybe carries little capacity to inspire viewers to consider new innovations or encourage a career in science and technological innovation. They somewhat feel like an imitation of the numerous sci-fi Hollywood films available, lacking intriguing scientific or technological innovations that are noteworthy. Some combine magic realism with science fiction such as the likes of Day of destiny and Hello Rain. Showing Afrofuturism (Acuff, 2019). Most of the science and tech ideas are not new to Nigerian audiences.

Makamation gives a breath of fresh air to the study as it places interest on the relevance of STEM education and innovation among young Nigerians. Although it hints on the pressure of tradition against progress, depicting the various complexities of embracing technology and at the same time preserving one's culture, it looks into the unfamiliarity and fear of AI in an African environment. The possibilities, potential challenges, and the edutainment factor is quite visible. Successful films like this, inspires both aspiring scholars as well as industry stakeholders (Ilukwe, 2025). The Combination of other genres with the sci-fi genre may help attract more varieties of audiences locally and internationally as seen in Makamation. This provides a trans-textual attribute in the narrative and enriches the stories, making it more encompassing. Genres are usually in a constant state of flux and its

semantic and syntactic iconographic conventions are usually prone to fluctuation. (Bredvig 2018).

Conclusion

Social control and surveillance dominates the themes in Nigerian sci-fi films and reflects the reality of the government, audiences/masses and the societal situation that stifles science and technological development in the country. An unproductive environment yields a suppressive and subjugating society. Star studded Sci-fi films shows the prospect for box office success like the film *Makmation*. Exhibition and distribution issues affect many gifted Nollywood filmmakers till date and there's a possibility that unchartered genre films may be affected due to sponsors, producers, and distributors shying away from such productions due to uncertainty of the guarantee for success and profit (Ilukwe,2025).

It is necessary to consider and harness the potential of the sci-fi genre in Nollywood to make a pragmatic difference. Stakeholders in film as well as the government should be more intentional in supporting sci-fi based story telling as a socially constructed agency. The Nigerian sci-fi genre can be a success and also induce a scientific and technological culture capable of bringing out the best practices of science and tech production and putting her among technologically advanced nations. This is can only be possible when the right steps are taken such as seen in the case of *Makmation*. Technological companies can be attracted to good innovative ideas in film and should be engaged and encouraged to become involved in such productions. The influence of onscreen fiction is not reserved merely for box office successes but it can also inspire real changes in science and society and we can look forward to the ground breaking inventions that may emerge from the silver screen in the future productions (Stephens,2023).

Recommendations

1 production of Sci-fi stories should be encouraged in Nollywood by seeking out talented writers of the genre as well as drawing from other mediums where the genre already thrives in Nigeria like novels and graphic novels. The necessary conditions can be created through film which can give the audience the general psyche and bring about an enabling environment with repeated offerings that portrays such ideological mindset.

2. Producers, writers and directors of the genre should ensure that the contents produced in Nollywood portrays the societal approach and

importance attached towards science and technological progress and are capable of inspiring and inducing its populace towards science and technological careers, investments and development.

3. Government, Stakeholders and policy makers should give the needed support to secure funding into the industry and find other creative measures to bring in investors. Such endeavors influence the public and policy initiatives towards a socially desirable trajectory capable of attracting an increase in the scientific and technological narrative in the society. Scientific organizations can become proactive by assisting filmmakers in producing science fiction film.

Discussion

Sci-fi films can serve as a change agent in the society. The genre has been proven to inspire young audiences towards learning and embarking on a science and technological career resulting in a more innovative and productive nation (Rahman, Sayed, Mazumdar, 2025). It also enables private and governmental institutions, to apply creative ways to improve the nation (Ilukwe, 2025). Although a reflection of the society the genre is not just a metaphoric representation of human experiences, it is vital to understand that the visible connection between science fiction and science fact is not always metaphorical (Stephens, 2023). The increase in the scholarship of science in cinema can be attributed to a new understanding within the science communication community that the meaning derived from science not scientific knowledge itself may be the most significant element contributing to public attitudes towards science. Its stories can be utilized as befitting tools to spread the necessary ideology with which the industry stakeholders, government and other institutions can positively shape and develop the economy (Bucchi & Trench, 2021). The current industrial and economic state of the nation will not grow at the needed pace if stakeholders do not think outside the box of familiar genre in the Nigerian film industry. Technologically advanced countries like the US and Japan have a very large population/audiences that consumes sci-fi stories, what is seen in those countries is not merely coincidental and for the case of Nigeria, intentional steps can and should be taken to understand the state of our industry regarding such measures.

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