

Influence of Entertainment Industry on Christian Faith and Its Moral Implications for Pastoral Ministry

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Abstract

The paper examines the influence of the entertainment industry on Christian faith and brings out the moral implications of this influence for pastoral ministry. The study emphasised music/songs as integral parts of entertainment, which are also fully taught and expressed in the Bible. Entertainment is not inherently bad; the way it is handled in our contemporary society is a concern, as it affects the integrity of Christian faith. The paper is descriptive in nature, and the author employs a qualitative research approach that involves a combination of literature review, biblical analysis, and reports of harmful effects of the entertainment industry from the Nigerian context. The paper asserts that, despite the Church's investment in entertainment, the entertainment industry has effects on Christianity, including spiritual and social effects, manifesting in withdrawal from Church programmes and stigmatisation, respectively. The paper argues that, instead of a holistic condemnation of the entertainment industry because it has become a significant part of contemporary lifestyle, pastoral ministry must critically engage Christian individuals and institutions by strengthening Christian media literacy, promoting biblical discernment, promoting responsible Christian parenting, developing positive alternatives for young people and promoting Christian engagement rather than complete isolation. The study concludes that while entertainment is not inherently bad and can be a tool for youth engagement, the personnel involved should be supported in practising entertainment in a morally acceptable manner.

Keywords: Entertainment Industry, Christian Faith, Pastoral Ministry.

Introduction

Christian faith in Nigerian society and the entertainment industry is one of the serious issues that calls for attention. With the rate at which Christian children are developing because of the entertainment industry's impact, if care is not taken, Christianity will lose its potency, and the coming generation may not be properly differentiated from the ungodly individuals as supposed to be. The Christian faith is summarised in doing what is good, right, just, pure, holy, friendly, and, above all, gloriously to the praise of God and blessings of the Church. The society to which Christians belong is social and calls for interaction with others in whatever environment they find themselves. However, it is so unfortunate that this community has been defiled, contaminated and infused with immoralities that have gained ground in the heart of Christians of today. This is not only limited to the young ones, but it is also evident among some irresponsible adults as a result of a careless lifestyle. The entertainment industry is a broad concept, but it will be limited to sound production (through music and television shows), video shows, nightclubs, amusement parks, comedy, and digital displays of attractions for people. There are people who prefer going to amusement parks to going to an orphanage, prison, or rural area for the gospel's sake, where their efforts will be greatly rewarded. They

prefer to be entertained outside the Church ministry. While entertainment is not inherently bad, the way it is handled in our contemporary society is a concern, as it affects the integrity of Christian faith. An example of such concern was experienced by the youth fellowship of a church, which invited a popular comedian to the pulpit during the youth week. Most of what was done and/or said was ungodly. In fact, God's name and word were made a jest of in the name of entertaining the audience. Another case was told of a pastor who brought a Muslim *Fuji* musician to the church anniversary grand finale; the church was later turned into a Jamboree funfair centre, and some invited guests left disappointed. The paper is descriptive in nature, and the author employs a qualitative research approach that involves a combination of literature review, biblical analysis, reports of harmful effects of the entertainment industry in the Nigerian context, and draws moral implications for pastoral ministry to address the problem. The paper examines entertainment in the Bible, the Christian faith and Nigerian society, the influence of the entertainment industry on Christianity, and moral implications for pastoral ministry.

Entertainment in the Bible

Music/Songs are discussed as an integral aspect of entertainment. The Bible records instances where this was demonstrated and should be our basis for the same. God's people sing; the deliverance of God's people, Israel, from the Egyptians was celebrated with songs (Exodus 15). For many years, music became a part of Israel's worship in both the tabernacle and the temple (1 Chronicles 6:31-32, 16:42). The books of Psalms and Song of Solomon show how the people of God bear great testimonies of joy and sorrow, praise and lament, and the congregation of Israel raised their voices and the sound of various instruments to God (Psalm 1-150). During his earthly ministry, Jesus practised hymn-singing alongside His disciples (Matthew 26:30). Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians, "Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through Psalm, hymns, and songs from the spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in words or deeds, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Colossians 3:16-17). Also, in his writings to the Ephesians church, he affirmed that "... speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19). Church music is a functional art only when it serves the purposes of God in the ministries of the Church: worship, proclamation of the Gospel, Christian education, pastoral care, and fellowship. Good Church music is uniquely functional only when it glorifies God and edifies individuals or the congregation within the Church's ministries. Hebrew worship-music in the temple of ancient Israel was provided by professionals (Albaz *et al.*, 2023:5). They were talented, trained and commissioned by virtue of their birth as directors, singers and instrumentalists of the priestly family of Levites to minister in their division at daily sacrifices and annual feasts as specified in the Hebrew calendar. The emergence of the synagogue in the inter-testament period to the New Testament era witnessed the participation of professional musicians as soloists and without the use of instruments, which was always vocal. Music in the early Church was professional and wholly congregational. As Christianity spread in the West, with its powers and influence came the development of trained choirs, instrumentalists and leaders (Lebaka, 2014:1-2). The sound evidence of godly entertainment in the Bible provides the moral ground for Pastoral ministry to address its harmful influences on Christian faith.

Christian Faith and Nigerian Society

When Jesus asked his disciples whether he would find faith on earth when he returns (Luke 18:8b), none responded to this deep-thought question. Among the three recognised religions in

Nigeria is Christianity; the other two are Islam and Traditional belief, but Christian faith differs from these. Christian faith is rooted in the birth, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. The Holy Bible provides revelation about Christian faith, and Christians are to tenaciously uphold the authority of the Bible in matters of faith and practices for all Christians. Christian faith is the belief of Christ's followers who have given their lives to him, believing in his teachings and living according to the same. These faithful are those expecting his second coming at any moment. Christianity's expansion in Africa contributed to significant transformations in African social and cultural life, particularly through literacy, education and the development of new forms of African Christian identity (Stone, 2000:4). In Nigeria, Christian organisations have established schools, hospitals, universities, businesses and charitable institutions. These institutions create employment and provide services that contribute to national development. Christian faith is based on the scriptures they take to be the voice and mind of God for them, the monotheism of God, the incarnation of the Church, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, inerrancy of the scripture, fall of man, power of prayer, holy living, fellowship of brethren, heaven, the home of the saved, judgment of God and many more (Grudem 1995, 100, 256, and 890). Nigeria, as a society, is a community with more religions apart from Christianity and believes in a culture which is not all that sinful, but to some extent (Peel, 2000:2). There are some half-baked individuals who have not been thoroughly dealt with in the Christian faith, but who always claim to be. This set of people, along with other religious practices, has imported into the Christian faith some unbiblical practices in the name of love, civilisation, modernisation, knowledge, moral relativism and through craftiness. The report today reveals that some individuals who describe themselves as Christians are among the fraudsters, scammers, occultists, public fund embezzlers, kidnappers, and terrorists. Both their names and confessions confirm the above assertion (15). These acts negate the Christian faith, which is based on the life of Christ at all times.

Influence of Entertainment Industry on Christian Faith

The entertainment industry has become a major part of people's lives, and its influence across various areas cannot be denied. Bartleby (2016). The power of entertainment or mass media has become so strong that its undoubtedly significant role in the world today stays beyond any question (10). Badmos (2014) asserts that there is no doubt that entertainment media have gained wider acceptability and usability and are also becoming probably the most important communication tools among people (15). Churches have also invested time and money in broadcast media such as television and radio. Sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and WhatsApp have the potential to shape the way the world communicates. McKinney (2014:25), in his assertion, agrees that many Churches have begun utilising social media in their ministry efforts. They publicise, encourage, and promote events, all on social media. Churches on most continents have also joined entertainment media to keep their members involved and alert to what is happening in their Churches. The design of churches changed after the Reformation to reflect a wider shift from a network social form of religion to one where spirituality was broadcast to more passive consumers. The Bible is the oldest book ever written. In Bible times, it was merely scrolls handwritten by people who were inspired by God (29). Later, it was made into a book, which is divided into two testaments, the Old and the New. The Church today has many publishing companies that publish and distribute a variety of books to all the parts of the world they can reach. There are Churches and organisations that distribute books, magazines, pamphlets, CDs/DVDs and other printed material to their members and visitors. In fact, some of these organisations and Churches employ staff who work with them. One of the most significant positive effects of the entertainment industry on Christianity is its contribution to evangelism. Films, music, television and social media provide

Christians with opportunities to communicate the Christian message to large audiences with different dialects. Christian filmmakers and musicians can present biblical teachings in forms that are attractive and understandable to contemporary audiences (Ukah, 2003:203). Christian films can therefore communicate themes such as salvation, repentance, faith, spiritual warfare and moral transformation through dramatic narratives. Azuawusiefe (2025:2 - 3) observes that Nigerian cinema has developed a significant relationship with popular religion and that Christian-themed films can function as instruments of moral and religious communication. Entertainment can also strengthen Christian identity. Gospel music, Christian films, drama and online content provide believers with cultural resources through which they can express their faith publicly (Brennan, 2018:12). Such entertainment can create a sense of belonging among Christians and help believers communicate their religious identity to wider society. On this note, it is a blessing to Christian faith.

Harmful Influence of Entertainment Industry on Christian Faith

Despite the enormous contributions of entertainment to the Christian faith, there are still adverse effects of entertainment on the faith, which are discussed in this section. While some of the contributions mentioned earlier are significant to the growth and development of the Christian faith, the damages are enormous, which demands the attention of pastoral ministry. The harmful effects are discussed below, which cut across spiritual, moral, financial, and social life.

Spiritual Effects: Most of the time while Church programme is ongoing, some are busy with entertainment on screens, some sit with African Magic for one quarter of the day viewing different films, movie and the likes which often result into tiredness because of excessive sitting (Afolabi and Oderinde, 2023:5). As a result of this addiction, there are people who withdraw from Church programmes that metamorphosed into spiritual backwardness. It is disheartening today that some claimed Christians can narrate three-hour films without mincing words, sing unedifying music for long without getting tired, but find it very difficult to remember sermon topics or recite a few biblical verses. Portier-Young (2024:210) states that the vessels that can be relied upon to expand and propagate Christianity have been caged by entertainment, and, as a matter of fact, the Church, the citadel of Christianity, is becoming spiritually desolate. Thus, this is causing a setback to the spiritual formation of the Church. Despite the advantages of Christian entertainment, it can sometimes distort Christian doctrine. Endong (2022:12) affirms that there are filmmakers and entertainers who may simplify complex theological issues to make stories more dramatic or commercially successful (12). There are entertainment contents that counteract biblical teachings and principles. Engaging with content that clashes with Christian doctrine can create confusion among believers, particularly young people, about what is acceptable or valuable in their faith. Reflecting on the above submission, the entertainment industry is eroding biblical values among the younger generation when it is not intentionally coordinated.

Moral Effects

There are Christians who enter the entertainment industry and may find themselves compromising their beliefs to fit into prevailing social practices. The pressure to conform to popular trends or behaviours can dilute their Christian values and lead to moral confusion that is inimical to their faith in Jesus Christ. The entertainment industry often subtly promotes violence, substance abuse, indecent dressings, sexual misconduct and questionable habits. Christians involved in producing some movies and acting immorally in the name of acceptance, popularity and gaining followers are morally bankrupt. Brennan (2018) affirms that the

entertainment industry often sets trends that young Christians may feel pressured to follow. The values promoted through popular media can influence their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours, potentially leading them away from the teachings of Christ (2). The display of material possessions in the entertainment industry can foster a materialistic mindset among young people. This is making some students consider education as a scam, and they are embarking on immoral ways of acquiring material possessions.

Financial Effect: The world is advancing moment by moment due to technological innovation. The industry has developed to the point where it has various means of reaching people, with financial implications. For the self-pleasure obtainable therein, especially youth go miles just to procure gadgets to satisfy their desires. The money invested in subscribing for data is huge, and some people prefer to spend their money on entertainment rather than investing in it in matters of God's kingdom. The money that can be used to further the spreading of the gospel has been diverted to personal pleasure. This, at times, brings indebtedness.

Social Effect: Because of the passion for the entertainment industry, which is necessarily not godly, it has separated some from others. This loneliness has resulted in various vices that are inimical to Christian faith. Stigmatisation, hatred, misinformation and the spread of unverified information that dent images of some individuals and churches are traceable to the social effects of the entertainment industry on Christian faith. There are different social groups in the entertainment industry which draw the attention of people from their family members and their Christian faith.

Moral Implications for Pastoral Ministry

The entertainment industry has become an important part of contemporary culture through television, film, music, social media, comedy, gaming and celebrity culture. Although entertainment is not inherently opposed to Christian faith, some forms of entertainment can promote values that conflict with Christian teachings, including materialism, sexual immorality, violence, profanity, individualism and the glorification of celebrity. (Romer, Jamieson, Bleakley and Jamieson, 2014:101-102). The following moral measures can therefore help to respond constructively to the harmful influences.

Strengthening Christian Media Literacy

The development of Christian media literacy among believers is capable of addressing the disastrous effects of the entertainment industry. Christians should be taught not merely to accept or reject entertainment but to examine critically the values, assumptions and worldview communicated through films, music, television and social media. Warren (1997:9-10) argues that Christians need to move beyond an uncritical attitude toward electronic media and develop reasoned judgments about what should be accepted or rejected in media content. Thus, an adequate understanding of media literacy from a Christian perspective will enable believers to navigate the challenges of the entertainment industry that are detrimental to Christian faith today.

Promoting Biblical Discernment

Deliberate cultivation of biblical discernment is a strong moral principle to address the harmful influences of the entertainment industry on the Christian faith. Christians need to evaluate entertainment according to biblical principles rather than simply by popularity, fashion, or peer pressure. The Bible encourages believers to test and discern what is good (Rom. 12:2; Phil. 4:8; 1 Thess. 5:21-22). This does not necessarily require Christians to withdraw completely

from the entertainment industry. Rather, they should learn to distinguish between entertainment that is morally constructive and that which undermines Christian identity.

Promoting Responsible Christian Parenting

Parents also have an important role in protecting children and young people from harmful entertainment. Parents should monitor the films, music, games, websites, and social media content their children consume. However, Romer *et. al.* (2014) state that supervision should be accompanied by education and conversation rather than merely imposing prohibitions (101-102). The parents are to provide intelligent guardianship, moral alertness for their wards, and uphold sound moral principles in their parenting, which will guard their children from harmful entertainment.

Encouraging Strategic Christian Participation in the Entertainment Industry

Christianity should not respond to negative entertainment simply by condemning the entertainment industry, but rather participate positively in the industry as filmmakers, musicians, actors, writers, producers, journalists, comedians, and digital content creators. This approach enables Christians to contribute alternative narratives that communicate truth, dignity, hope, justice, love and redemption. Stone (2000:9-10) maintains that film can serve as a constructive partner in Christian thought and that Christians have historically used the arts to communicate faith and values. Therefore, Christians should be encouraged to create high-quality entertainment that is both artistically excellent and morally responsible.

Improving the Quality of Christian Entertainment

Christian films, music, drama and digital content should avoid being poorly produced and disconnected from contemporary realities. Hendershot (2004) notes that if Christian entertainment is to compete effectively in the wider entertainment marketplace, it must combine sound Christian values with creativity, professional production (155), interesting storytelling, cultural relevance, doctrinal impartation and moral lessons to cope with the reality of life.

Developing Positive Alternatives for Young People

Churches should provide positive alternatives to harmful entertainment. Youth programmes can include Christian music, drama, film discussions, creative arts, sports, literary activities and digital content production. Hatcher (2018:1) affirms that providing constructive alternatives can reduce excessive dependence on entertainment that promotes values inconsistent with Christian faith.

Promoting Christian Engagement Rather than Complete Isolation

Withdrawal from the entertainment industry is not an effective way to handle its harmful influences. Christianity exists within society and must communicate its message within contemporary culture. Staub (2006:1) proposes that Christians should neither withdraw from culture nor uncritically conform to it; instead, they should understand culture and seek to transform it through Christian engagement. Thus, Christians have moral obligations to transform the entertainment industry through their intentional and relational engagement. The pastoral leadership should take every available opportunity to discourage seductive dressings such as body hugs, spaghetti straps, off-shoulders, transparent clothes, see-through blouses, bell-bottoms, mini-skirts, and this should be on the moral ground of love, dignity and integrity.

Conclusion

The paper examined the influence of the entertainment industry on Christian faith and brought out moral implications for pastoral ministry. The influence of the entertainment industry on Christian faith is examined from a negative perspective due to its harmful effects. The reality of the entertainment cannot be denied, and it is soiling the integrity of the Christian faith. The Bible provides basic moral principles that will guide Christians' involvement in the entertainment industry and protect them from its harmful influences. The paper argues that instead of holistic condemnation of entertainment industry because it has become a significant part of contemporary lifestyle, pastoral ministry must critically engage Christian individuals and institutions by strengthening Christian media literacy, promoting biblical discernment, establishing responsible Christian parenting, encouraging Christian participation in the entertainment industry, improving the quality of Christian entertainment, developing positive alternatives for young people and promoting Christian engagement rather than complete isolation. The study concluded that while entertainment is not bad and can be a tool for youth engagement, personnel involved should be supported to practice entertainment in a scripturally acceptable manner.

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