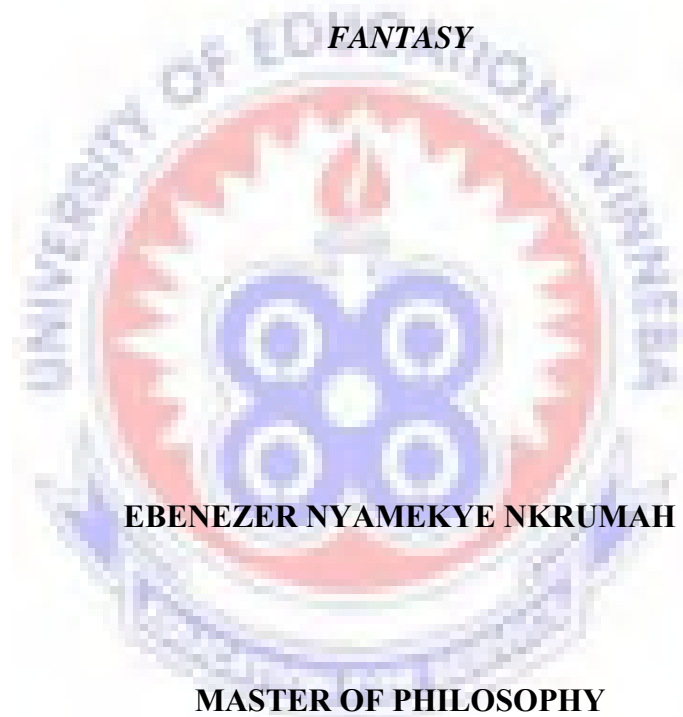


UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**ON THE BLACKNESS OF THE PANTHER:
INTERROGATING AN AFROFUTURISTIC REALITY IN A DIASPORAN
FANTASY**



2019

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

ON THE BLACKNESS OF THE PANTHER:

INTERROGATING AN AFROFUTURISTIC REALITY IN A DIASPORAN

FANTASY



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7171810002

A dissertation in the Department of Communication and Media Studies, Faculty of Foreign Languages Education and Communication, submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the award of the degree of

Master of Philosophy

(Business Communication)

in the University of Education, Winneba

AUGUST, 2019

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Ebenezer Nyamekye Nkrumah declare that this dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of Dissertation as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: MR. KWESI AGGREY

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to all film audiences who look beyond the surface to find meaning, knowing that there is always much lying beneath the aesthetics of cinema.



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ABSTRACT

Media sell both products and worldviews and in contemporary times, films have become a standard target to vend such products and worldviews. Some scholars have argued that media texts have ideological contents embedded in them for the reason that these media texts articulate either overtly or covertly the maker's attitudes, beliefs, political and socio-cultural stances. This study through the lens of postcolonial theory, stereotype theory and theory of hegemony, and a qualitative content analysis design critically examined how the *Black Panther (2018)* film depicted Africa. It also probed into how the film was used to address stereotypes in Western media representations of Africa and outlined the dominant ideologies embedded in the film. The study revealed that the *Black Panther (2018)* film used the following themes to depict Africa: advanced society, primordial society, cultural hybridity and cultural appropriation. The study also showed that while the film addressed some common stereotypes on Africa in Western media through science and technology, economic independence and gender equity, it also reinforced the cultural homogenisation stereotype. As a result, the study emphasised that although the film projected ideologies such as Afrofuturism, Pan-Africanism, there were some neo-liberal ideals such as open borders and free trade embedded in the film. The study therefore, concluded that while the *Black Panther (2018)* film depicted Africa in the manner that subverted some colonial legacies, it also reinforced other colonial legacies.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

The construction of scientific knowledge about the world has become more and more based on images rather than written texts (Stafford, 1991). The things people see are fundamental in the way they make sense of the world around them (Cubitt, 2006; Hayles, 2006; Thrift, 2008). Many writers have argued that the visual is central to the cultural constructions of social life especially in contemporary societies (Ansong, 2012; Crary, 1992; Mitchell, 2005). Beginning in the 1970s, the social sciences experienced a significant change in their understanding of social life (Rose, 2012). While this change was deepened on a number of social and cultural analysis particularly the Marxist critique of mass culture, according to Rose (2012), during the 1980s, the shift in the understanding of social life in social and cultural analysis gathered force, pace and breadth. Culture became a crucial means by which many social scientists understood social processes, social identities and social change (Hall, 1997).

Hall (1997) contends that the concept of culture does not so much refer to a set of things but the production and exchange of meanings. Thus, culture depends on its participants interpreting meaningfully what is around them and making sense of the world. These meanings may be explicit or implicit, conscious or unconscious; they may be left as truth or as a fantasy. Whatever form they take; they are the basis upon which social life is constructed.

The proliferation of mass media has accentuated the pervasive nature of visual representations in the production and exchange of meanings on a daily basis (Croteau & Hoynes, 2018). The modern world is very much a “seen phenomenon” (Jenks, 1995; p. 2) and a “society of spectacle” (Virilio, 1994; p.16). This is because people are almost constantly surrounded by different kinds of visual technologies (Jenks, 1995; Virilio, 1994). These visual technologies include photography, motion pictures, television and digital graphics. The images these visual technologies display come in the form of films, television programmes, advertisements, social media and newspaper pictures (Croteau & Hoynes, 2018). The images render the world in visual terms and this rendering is never innocent: they interpret the world in very particular ways (Buckingham, 2003; Rose, 2012). They re-present reality to achieve a given message (Croteau & Hoynes, 2018). Fields (2004) acknowledges that what people know about, think about, and believe about what happens in the world outside of their personal first-hand experiences are shaped by the images reported in the media.

A critical approach to visual images is therefore needed to examine the social practices and effects of these media images on its viewing audiences (Rose, 2012). A number of studies argue that the impact of visual representations on contemporary societies is profound and necessitates that studies on films be fundamentally re-thought and redefined (Rampley, 2005; Spicer, 2012).

Prior to the 19th century, people gathered round campfires in the dark to listen to stories. However, in the contemporary era, films have become the modern campfire where stories are told (Spicer, 2012). Millions of people are watching films on a daily basis in every corner of the world (Mbe, 2011). Films offer diverse audience an inimitable way of

seeing and a kind of feeling that is deeply gratifying and often extends far beyond the reach of ink and paper (Winn, 2009). They also provide the avenue for catharsis and open the doors for unparalleled access to worldviews across the globe (Mahmood, 2013).

The word film is an interesting paradox; one that has attracted more than a few definitions, with ascribed characteristics and understandings being developed and revised every now and then (Dick, 2005). According to Prinz (2007), a film can either refer to a scripted and edited motion picture-based story, usually shown in a cinema and sometimes on television or a perforated-edged strip of plastic coated with light-sensitive emulsion for exposure in a camera. Thus, the word film is used to refer to both motion pictures as well as the technology used to produce them, although that technology is no longer in use in contemporary times (Prinz, 2007).

Understanding films within the postmodern cultural landscape requires a historical perspective (Harbord, 2007). The development of the requisite technology for films has existed for a little over a century (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010). Yet, early optical devices such as the phenakistoscope, the zoetrope, and picture “flip-books” attest that human beings have been fascinated with motion pictures for a very long time (Winn 2009; p. 3). These devices used their optical “tricks” to make still pictures printed on paper, appear to move (Winn 2009; p.4). The modern mass medium known as films had to wait for technical advances in these optical devices to screen its earliest production between the period 1884 and 1929 (Howe, 2011; Pence, 2013; Winn 2009).

While Jackson (2006) and Squires (2009) trace the history of films back to the 19th century inventions of Thomas Edison, Manley (2011) has disregarded that viewpoint. According to Manley (2011), history cannot be credited to one person and any attempt to

do so would be tantamount to oversimplification of the history. He adds that what each inventor has done over the years is to further improve upon the progress other inventors had made. Thus, the development of the requisite technology for films was not achieved by any one individual or group (Manley, 2011). The technology was developed, improved, and transformed through the combined efforts and inventions of many people working in Western Europe and North America in the late 1880s and 1890s (Dancyger, 2007; Manley, 2011; Singer, 2001).

In the United States, Thomas Edison's kinetoscope and in France, the Lumière Brothers' cinématographe, were some of earliest technologies that started making short films (Dancyger, 2007). These early short films quickly became the most powerful form of 'aesthetics of astonishment' (Singer, 2001; p.130), a key component in what Friedberg (2006) designates as the 'mobilized virtual gaze' (p.2). Informed by changes in the nature of history itself as a discipline, 'the objects of film' have had their own turn in history (Spicer, 2012; p.3). Films have emerged from the construct of still photographs (Piccirillo, 2011) to short films (Dancyger, 2007) and now into what can be described as an electronic signal comprising of moving graphics, sound and text (Hu, 2016). As film history progressed, so did its consumption (Gane & Beer, 2008). The period where films were, but just a distinctive socio-cultural ritual of watching theatrical projections in parks and museums are no more (Grusin, 2007). Films are now in a distributed form, circulating in various guises across a range of different media and in various locations in a multiplicity of ways (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010; Grusin, 2007).

Many people use film and movie synonymously in their everyday discourses (Dick, 2005; Giannetti, 2014; Ryan, 2010). Although, both words have similar meanings and can

be used interchangeably in general parlance (Dick, 2005; Giannetti, 2014; Prinz, 2007; Saleem, 2007), the word movie is commonly used in the American English specifically for Hollywood blockbusters (Hesa, 2016; Saleem, 2007). However, in a formal and academic context like this research work, film is mostly preferred (Charney & Schwartz, 1995; Prinz, 2007; Ryan, 2010).

1.1.1 Hollywood Films

Hollywood's global dominance in the film industry has been the least contestable proposition in media and film-related literatures (Burrowes, 2011; Rodman, 2012; Shaheen, 2003; Silver, 2007). While some scholars have ascribed Hollywood's popularity and global dominance to its creative milieu of famous actors, directors, producers and studios (Burrowes, 2011; Silver, 2007), others point to Hollywood's distribution structures and marketing strategies (Shaheen, 2003; Rodman, 2012). In one breath, Hollywood is a very specific geographic location in Southern California and in another breath, Hollywood is everywhere: with its assortment of film images, its presence is felt across the entire globe (Scott, 2004). Hollywood was incorporated as a municipality in 1903 and later, in 1910, consolidated with the city of Los Angeles (Los Angeles Auditor's Office, 1913). It was then that a prominent film industry emerged, eventually becoming the oldest and the most recognisable film industry in the world (Nuwer, 2014).

The term 'Hollywood' has become synonymous and a notable home for the American film industry (Ibbi, 2014), revolving around the six major studios of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA); Paramount Pictures, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, Universal City Studios and Warner Bros. Entertainment (Sigismondi, 2012).

These film studios, often simply known as the Majors, are regarded as the six diversified media conglomerates whose various film production and distribution subsidiaries collectively command approximately eighty to 85 percent of United States domestic Box Office revenue (Betting & Hall, 2012; Epstein, 2006). The economic impact of the Hollywood film industry along various dimensions is vast (Gomery, 2002). Bursch (2018) citing the Report for the 2016 Bureau of Labour Statistics released in 2017, observes that the American film industry among others, is a key driver of the United States economy; it supports over two million jobs, amounting to \$138 billion dollars in total wages. In 2018, a total of 868 films were released from Hollywood summing up to a gross estimate of over \$11 billion. Out of this gross estimate, more than 60 percent of it was generated from the international markets (Walls & McKenzie, 2012). According to De-Zoysa and Newman (2002), beginning with the mid-twentieth century, more than 50 percent of Hollywood's gross annual revenue has been generated from sales outside of United States. This has been mainly due to the large quantities of Hollywood films exported to different parts of the world (De-Zoysa & Newman, 2002).

The internationalisation of Hollywood films occasioned the mass projection of American worldviews, personalities and consumer brands across the globe (Ibbi, 2014; Combs, 2013). Maisuwong (2012) observes that the culture of patronising brands like McDonald's and KFC became popular outside America when Hollywood films started promoting these consumer brands. The phenomenon of product placement is however a very lucrative venture in Hollywood films due to its global reach (Roberts, 2004). The film producers have found ways to conceal product promotional activities in their plots (Maxfield, 2003). Combs (2013) maintains that Hollywood films are not just a pack of

aesthetics in a simulated reality but they are also vending products, personalities and worldviews.

The term 'blockbuster' is typically reserved for Hollywood films with large budgets and big sales results at the Box Office (Cucco, 2009; Sheldon, 2011). The word 'blockbuster' was formally used to describe large-scale bombs during the Second World War. The bomb was supposedly able to take out a whole city block. Later, it was used in the post-war period to refer to expensive and highly profitable Hollywood films (Cucco, 2009; Sheldon, 2011).

In considering the relationship between Hollywood films and culture, LaSalle (2004) and Shaheen (2013) contend that such relationship is a complicated dynamic. While Hollywood films influence culture, they are also products of culture (LaSalle, 2004; Shaheen, 2013). From the *candy floss* romances to the *action-thrillers*; whether surreal or tangled wave of deceit; these films derive their sustenance, ideas and imaginations from the society (LaSalle, 2004). They mirror society, yet, while at it, they also re-engineer ideological tenets that stealthily orient consumer's perception and attitude towards a change or newly shared convictions (LaSalle, 2004; Shaheen, 2013).

Africa is a standard target to vend Hollywood films (Ibbi, 2013). Guneratne (2003) buttresses this assertion, stating that African countries in lieu of creating self-sufficiency, foster dependency within an exploitative system of global economic relations. This dependency is thus, heavily aided by a linear flow of Western cultural products into Africa.

1.1.2 Hollywood Films and Africa

Hollywood film industry has carried out a number of international productions (Trumpbour, 2008). According to Rodman (2012), these international productions were among other things, planned to convey a message that the rest of the world are well represented in Hollywood films. It is however not surprising to see some of these international film productions solely focussed on Africa (Trumpbour, 2008). *Sheena* (1984), *The Gods Must Be Crazy II* (1989), *Sarafina* (1992), *The Lion King* (1994), *Tarzan* (1999), *Black Hawk Down* (2001), *Tears of the Sun* (2003), *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), *The Last King of Scotland* (2006), *Blood Diamond* (2006), *Invictus* (2009), *Beasts of No Nation* (2015) and more recently *Black Panther* (2018) are some of Hollywood's international productions that focused on Africa (Marco, 2018).

While some scholars have hinted that Hollywood films such as the ones listed above manipulate the images to transform reality (Carrol & Choi, 2006; Higgins, 2012), Klein (2014) however, argues that to speak of this manipulation is to forget that from its beginning, cinema had manipulated reality to entertain. Indeed, Hollywood cinema had become the most powerful industry as a result of that, Klein (2014) adds.

To rightly divide the functional role of Hollywood films in Africa, it is important to first consider how films emerged in Africa and thereafter, what they have become in recent times (Macedo, 2017). To do so, Garuba and Himmelman (2012) acknowledge that Western films in Africa emerged from the colonial days. Colonial masters used theatrical projections as a mechanism to infiltrate the native culture to reinforce the colonial agenda (Landau, 2002). According to Awindor (2017) colonial cinemas became tools to emphasis white supremacy and to further reinforce the subjugation of the colonies. For instance,

Foluke (2014) observes that colonial film units were spotted across all British territories. These colonial film units were means “to civilize Africa” (Foluke, 2014; p.4).

During the second half of the twentieth century, the period of decolonization began to take place in Africa (Oscherwitz, 2012). The films produced in Africa at the time were politically conscious and completely oppositional to the stereotypical and distorted expressions of the dominant cinemas that were grounded in colonial thought and rationale (Harrow, 2007). However, toward the end of the twentieth century, a new wave of African filmmakers emerged and shifted away from the didactic formulas of their predecessors to a more narrative approach that aimed at “entertainment over instruction” (Ukadike, 2003; p.126).

Cinema gained momentum throughout the second half of the twentieth century and film production became a tool harnessed for the advancement of political, social and cultural development throughout the world (Mbe, 2011). However, owing to the continued dominance of the West in the exhibition and distribution of films, very little of what the African cinema produced was shown to the global audience (Stam & Shohat, 2014). The mainstream images of Africa available to global audience were thus produced through a Eurocentric lens (Manlove, 2012). Subsequently, these Eurocentric representations of Africa adopted colonial fictions in the attempt to reproduce colonialist ideologies (Sakota-Kokot, 2014). Africans were portrayed “for Western voyeuristic gaze” as savages, lazy natives, childlike, needy recipients of Western aid, helpless victims unable to progress or be agents of their own change and above all, fanatic allies of the West (Manlove, 2012; p.2). These perpetually-damaging stereotypical images of Africa on screen have watered

the miseducation of Western audiences to blossom, and have resulted in a significant lasting effect on African societies (Macedo, 2017).

1.1.3 The Black Panther Film

The *Black Panther* (2018) film was one of the most commercially successful films in 2018. It had recorded a global Box Office estimate of over \$1.3 billion as of May, 2018, surpassing iconic Box Office successes such as *Titanic* (Strong & Chaplin, 2019). The *Black Panther* (2018) film was premiered on 29th January, 2018 and later released to the cinemas on 16th February, that same year. The film was directed by Ryan Coogler and produced and distributed by Marvel Studios and Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures respectively (Marvel, 2018). The success of the film has led Marvel Studios to announce that there are sequels and spin-offs in the works.

The film tells a story of a warrior king named T'Chaka, who unites five tribes under one nation called Wakanda, a fictional African country which had never been colonised. Wakanda houses the earth's only source of *Vibranium*, valuable mineral with extraordinary abilities to absorb, store, and release large amounts of kinetic energy. The Wakandans used *Vibranium* to become the most technologically advanced and prosperous nation on the earth, yet, they presented themselves to the rest of the world as an economically impoverished nation. They used their technology to project a holographic image of a rainforest to shield their technology from outsiders. Upon the death of T'Chaka, his son T'Challa becomes the next king and the Black Panther. His reign was challenged by a relentless and vengeful villain Erik Killmonger who was a childhood victim of T'Challa's father's mistake. At the end, T'Challa released the full power of the Black Panther to defeat Killmonger and secures the safety of Wakanda.

The *Black Panther* (2018) film traces its origin to American comics. It was the first Black superhero to hit mainstream comics. Created by Jack Kirby and Stan Lee in 1966, the Black Panther comic book coincided with the formation of the Black Panther Party, a revolutionary political organisation founded to protect Black residents from acts of police brutality in the United States of America (Qurashi, 2018). While both the Black Panther comic book and the Black Panther Party adopted the effigy of the Black Panther animal as a symbol of strength, 52 years down the line, the same effigy now represents the strength of Black people in the *Black Panther* (2018) film (Qurashi, 2018; Strong & Chaplin, 2019). Qurashi (2018) explains that the connection between the *Black Panther* (2018) film and the Black Panther effigy can be seen in philosophical terms; both have the capability to connect with people of African descent. However, Strong and Chaplin (2019) explain further that the connection similarly relied upon the projection of Wakanda as “an Afrofuturistic reality in a Diasporan fantasy” (p.27). The concept of Afrofuturism reflects the use of fictional texts within the African diaspora in projecting the alter ego of Black people: a world dominated among other things, by science and technology (Strong & Chaplin, 2019; Yaszek, 2006). This philosophical relationship established by Qurashi (2018) and Strong and Chaplin (2019) explains the use of similar figurative language in the title of this study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The phenomenon of using film and other visual images to portray and legitimise an idea or concept has long been studied (Cubitt, 2006; Stafford, 1991). Film producers have over the years used the “power” of film to hegemonically influence and or assert cultural

leadership and perpetuate stereotypes (Hall, 2013; Morrissey & Warr, 1997). A study conducted by Alayinka (2006) revealed that film audiences tend to accept the images in films as the “standard status quo” even if the images are representing a variant form of the culture of the said people (p. 12).

A critical approach to film analysis is therefore needed to examine the social practices and effects of filmic texts on its viewing audiences (Rose, 2012). A number of studies argue that the impact of films on contemporary societies is profound. There is therefore the need for film studies to be fundamentally re-thought and redefined (Rampley, 2005; Spicer, 2012).

The *Black Panther* (2018) film is one such visual media that has generated much heuristic discussions among visual media scholars and literary critics alike (Eckardt, 2018; Strong & Chaplin, 2019; Qurashi, 2018). The film explores issues related to the balance of power between the West and Africa as well as existing debates surrounding how much and in what ways nations should engage with and be tied to each other (Eckardt, 2018).

Strong and Chaplin (2019) in their study on the *Black Panther* (2018) film examined the concept of Afrofuturism using conceptual lenses from diaspora studies and Afro-science fictions. Qurashi (2018) on the other hand, interrogated the economic implications of the Wakandan economy in the *Black Panther* (2018) film. He further compared the economic policies of Wakanda with that of Botswana using a mixed method approach.

Although Eckardt (2018) and Strong and Chaplin (2019) acknowledged that the *Black Panther* (2018) film thrives on rebutting negative Western media depictions of Africa, they based their assertion primarily on the technological advancement of Wakanda. Thus, they did not examine how the film methodically addressed negative Western media

depictions of Africa. This study thus, seeks to critically interrogate how the *Black Panther* (2018) film depicted Africa, addressed stereotypes and conveyed dominant ideologies using a multi-theoretical framework and qualitative content analysis methodology.

1.3 Research Objectives

The *Black Panther* (2018) film creates a fantasy where the most powerful nation in the world is a fictional country in Africa. Many of the discussions on the film have praised the *Black Panther* (2018) film for projecting Africa in positive terms (Eckardt, 2018; Strong & Chaplin, 2019). However, Batemon (2014) asserts that a film, irrespective of its content and genre, has its inherent ideological underpinnings. Based on this foundation, this research study sought to:

1. Interrogate how the *Black Panther (2018)* film depicted Africa.
2. Investigate how the *Black Panther (2018)* film addressed stereotypes in Western media representations of Africa.
3. Identify the dominant ideologies embedded in the *Black Panther (2018)* film.

1.4 Research Questions

This research study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How does the *Black Panther (2018)* film depict Africa?
2. How does the *Black Panther (2018)* film address stereotypes in Western media representations of Africa?
3. What are the dominant ideologies embedded in the *Black Panther (2018)* film?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Conducting research on this subject is of importance to academia and other key stakeholders in a number of ways. First, this study will add up to existing literature on Western films on Africa. The study will also pave the way for further studies to be conducted in the area of films and specifically on the *Black Panther (2018)* film.

Furthermore, the findings and recommendations of this study will be useful to the film industry at large, particularly filmmakers who are interested in cinematic depictions of Africa. It will serve as a resource on how to package and represent images of the diverse cultures in Africa.

Films have the power to express culture's ideals as well as shape them (Clough & Halley, 2007). Understanding films therefore is part of being culturally literate (Maxfield, 2003). Thus, the findings and recommendations of this study will also empower film audiences to understand the social role of films; to become critical viewers of images and to reject representations that disempower marginalised groups.

In addition, while stories can be used to deprive people of their dignity, it can also be used to restore that dignity (Macedo, 2017). Macedo (2017) also establishes that films that provide alternative images to the negative Western media representations of Africa can help restore the self-respect lost by millions of Africans as a result of colonialism and Western cultural hegemony. To governments, civil societies and film industries in Africa, this study therefore heartens the promotion of alternative images and narratives that counter the uni-dimensional and stereotypical Western representations of Africa.

1.6 Delimitation

This study is limited to only the *Black Panther (2018)* film and how it depicted Africa, addressed stereotypes and conveyed dominant ideologies embedded in the film.

1.7 Organisation of the Study

This study is composed of five chapters. The first chapter which is also the introductory chapter constitutes the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives and research questions. The significance of the study along with the delimitation of the research are also outlined in this chapter.

The next chapter, which is the second chapter, encompasses both the literature review and the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

The research methods and procedures used for the data collection are outlined in the chapter three. It should also be noted that, issues discussed under this chapter have been sub-grouped under the following headings; research approach, research design, sample and sampling technique, data collection methods, data collection procedure, method of data analysis, ethical issues, trustworthiness and credibility.

The fourth chapter however discusses the findings of this study. The issues are presented in a thematic structure and analysed using the theoretical frameworks and concepts in the literature review.

The final chapter, which is the chapter five, sums up the study by providing conclusions particularly from the findings and offer recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews related literature on the following concepts: film; Africa and film; stereotypes in Western media representations of Africa; and, ideology and film. The chapter further discusses the theories that underpin the study and their relevance to the research work.

2.1 Film

Film, also referred to as movie or motion picture has attracted more than a few definitions, with ascribed characteristics and understandings being developed and revised every now and then (Dick, 2005). According to Hayward (2000), it is difficult to settle on a standard definition for film since every scholar has a peculiar way of describing the concept. However, Dick (2005) indicates that the term 'film' can either denote a scripted and edited motion picture-based story, usually shown in a cinema and sometimes on television or it can also refer to a perforated-edged strip of plastic coated with light-sensitive emulsion for exposure in a camera. In short, the word film can be used to refer to both motion pictures as well as the technology used to produce them (although that technology is no longer in use in contemporary times).

Bordwell and Thompson (2010) broadly categorise films into short films and feature films. Short films are motion pictures that have a running time of 40 minutes or less

and feature films are motion pictures that have a running time of 40 minutes or longer (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010). Short films are often screened at film festivals and made by independent filmmakers with either low budgets or no budgets at all. While more often than not, feature films are produced for cinemas and home viewing (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010; Manley, 2011). In the view of Altman (2006), feature films are more popular and therefore have become synonymous with motion pictures in general.

Studies on film analysis have revealed that there are five formal elements in films. These are: literary design, visual design, cinematography, editing and sound design (Bellour, 2000; Rothwell, 2007; Speidel, 2006; Heiderich, 2015). According to Rothwell (2007), these five formal elements are what makes a film uniquely a 'film' and separated from all the other art forms such as paintings and photographs. Heiderich (2015) however, in his study referred to these five formal elements of as "film forms" (Heiderich, 2015; p. 3). Ballour (2000) and Speidel (2006) argue that analysing film is like analysing literature, it entails evaluating discourse, including words, phrases, and images. Having a clear argument and supporting evidence is every bit as critical to film analysis as to other forms of academic writing. However, unlike literature, film incorporates audio-visual elements and therefore introduces a new dimension to analysis. Thus, the five formal elements in films (as mentioned above) provide the tools for an effective analysis (Bellour, 2000; Speidel, 2006).

The literary design in film analysis comprises the story, setting, characters, characters' names, dialog and the title of the film (Bellour, 2000; Rothwell, 2007; Speidel, 2006; Heiderich, 2015). The literary design is also known as the script (Rothwell, 2007) or the narrative design (Speidel, 2006; Heiderich, 2015). According to Speidel (2006), a

film's literary design is a good place to start an analysis since it provides the "basic context for understanding" a film's plot (p.2).

The second aspect of film forms is visual design. It comprises lighting, costumes, makeup, characters' performance and all arrangements before the camera (Bellour, 2000; Rothwell, 2007; Speidel, 2006; Heiderich, 2015). According to Bellour (2000), lighting contributes to perception, meaning and mood in film. It includes the specific areas in films that are illuminated as well as those that are not. Makeup also adds to the storytelling. It consists of special effects such as wounds, blood or fake teeth (Speidel, 2006). While costume consists of what the actors and actresses wear, set design on the other hand, comprises of how the scenes in the film are organised (Bellour, 2000; Rothwell, 2007). Heiderich (2015) argues that the visual design provides the "substantial and material allure" for a film's literary design (p.7). This means that while the literary design provides the milieu to a film's plot, the visual design offers viewers the sensual interpretation of plot (Heiderich, 2015).

Cinematography is the third aspect of film form. It comprises the choice of framing, lenses, camera angle, camera movements, what is in focus, as well as what is not (Bellour, 2000; Rothwell, 2007; Speidel, 2006; Heiderich, 2015). Cinematography records essentially the visual elements of literary design (Bellour, 2000). Heiderich (2015) acknowledges that in cinematography, *mis-en-scène*, a French term to describe the scenes in a film can affect the viewer's feeling towards the story as well as the characters. For instance, a room which is brightly lit may seem comfortable and perhaps festive than a room which is dark and gloomy. Heiderich (2015) argues that anyone can set a camera on a tripod and hit record, but the artistry of cinematography comes in controlling what the

viewer sees (or doesn't see) and how the image is presented. Film is a visual medium, and the best-shot films are ones where you can tell what's going on without hearing any of the dialogue (Heiderich, 2015). Filmmakers plan scenes using the art of cinematography. They use different shots to construct a clear, cohesive narrative that is pleasing for the viewer (Speidel, 2006).

The fourth aspect of film is montage or editing. Editing is the sequencing of the shots in the film and how the individual shots recorded by camera are pieced together into a full-length feature film to tell a story (Bellour, 2000; Rothwell, 2007; Speidel, 2006; Heiderich, 2015). Filmmakers go through rigorous processes in deciding which of the shots recorded by camera will be appropriate to put together in order to achieve the intended meaning (Bellour, 2000; Rothwell, 2007). According Rothwell (2007), filmmakers have two major contributions to a film's story. The first is the sequencing of shots in terms of how the audience "reads" the film (p. 9). This is evident in when the filmmakers cut from an actor delivering a line of dialog to another actor reacting to what was said. The second is the pacing of the shots which helps establish the overall feeling or mood. For example, fast cuts from one shot to another create excitement or tension. Longer duration shots allow the audience to take in more of the visual detail (Rothwell, 2007).

The fifth aspect of film is sound design. Sound design largely refers to the choice of sound or music that filmmakers employ to complement the images (Bellour, 2000; Rothwell, 2007; Speidel, 2006; Heiderich, 2015). The concept of sound design deals with the sound components or what is heard in films (Heiderich, 2015). Speidel (2006) points out that the sound design in film ranges from dialog editing, sound effects to the music used to amplify the storylines. Bellour (2000) also indicates that the type of music played

under a scene can greatly influence viewer comprehension. For example, playing a luscious ballad during a scene between a man and a woman helps create a romantic scene, while playing an ominous music during the same scene may make the viewer think that the man is about to hurt the woman or vice versa.

There appears to exist a system of interconnectedness with the five formal elements of film forms. Though each element addresses a distinct facet of film analysis, they seem work hand in hand. Bellour (2000) corroborates this assertion by signifying that for an enriching experience, one needs to understand the five formal elements of film in order to decipher the “connoted meanings” in films (p. 2).

2.1.1 Silent Film

Silent film as we conceive it now dates back to the 19th century when films lack synchronised sound. With the debate on silent film having been characterised by several transitions, scholars like Singer (2001), Manley (2011) and Seating (2018) have maintained that in the early 1800s, inventors like Thomas Edison in America and the Lumière Brothers in France had already commenced work on machines that projected images on screens. This sparked what will later be known in the history of film making as the silent film era. Some scholars situate the silent period between 1894 and 1929 (Howe, 2011; Pence, 2013; O’ware, 2016). During this period, a number of motion pictures were created and projected in theatres on big screens. The films had no dialogues, so the characters had to pantomime while the audience followed their body language and subtitles to deduce meaning (Goff, 2017). O’ware (2016) described these kinds of films as “the silence of the voice” (p. 18). Singer (2001) avers that films produced during the silent era were accompanied with live

music. Theatres in the silent period also employed “descriptive talkers” who narrated the film to the audiences (p. 2).

One of the landmark inventions that characterised the silent era was Eadweard Muybridge’s redefinition of the methods of photography in 1878 which proved that a galloping horse lifts all four hooves off the ground at one point in its sequence of motion (Goff, 2017; Squires, 2009). Eadweard Muybridge introduced a special equipment that photographed horses in motion using cameras that had their shutters triggered by horse movements. This was both a technical and conceptual breakthrough in film making (Goff, 2017; Squires, 2009). As a result, some scholars have credited Eadweard Muybridge as the father of motion pictures (Tyler, 2010; Squires, 2009).



Figure 1 Eadweard Muybridge's *The Horse in Motion*, 1878

(Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division; source:

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3a45870>)

Nineteen years later, after Eadweard Muybridge's 1878 breakthrough, Thomas Edison and William Kennedy Laurie Dickson started shooting short films in the United States. The Lumière brothers in France also followed in 1895 (Dancyger, 2007). In 1915, David Wark Griffith released *The Birth of a Nation*, originally called *The Clansman*. The film is noted to be one of the most controversial films in history as well as the first film to last three and a half hours long (Slide, 2004). *The Birth of a Nation* went on to gross more than 60 million dollars at the Box Office, a figure that was almost unheard of at the time (Slide, 2004).

The period from 1903 to 1915 is referred to as the era of the *Nickeldeons* (Friedberg, 2006). The *Nickeldeons* were the first indoor exhibition spaces set up in "converted storefronts." These small, simple theatres charged five cents per admission (Friedberg, 2006; p. 13). No upper-class socialite would attend a film exhibition at the *Nickeldeons* because it was assumed that patrons of the *Nickeldeons* could not afford a higher ticket price (Munsterberg, 2001). According to Goff (2017), *The Birth of a Nation* was not just a box office success; it also rewrote the *Nickeldeon* segregation. Everybody wanted see that film. Both the middle class and the upper-class converged to watch David Wark Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* at the *Nickeldeons*.

2.1.2 Emergence of Talkies

In the study on *The Era of the Talkies*, Burns (2013) referred to 'talkies' as simply films that can talk. The transition from silent films to talkies marked the development of synchronised sound in the motion picture industry (Dibbits, 1996). According to Burns

(2013), the transition from silent films to talkies was the most important change in the history of filmmaking.

The first invention to experiment with synchronised sound was Thomas Edison's phonograph (Manley, 2011). Thomas Edison invented the phonograph in 1877 to mechanically record and reproduce sound. The phonograph worked with a film projector. This technology had substantial drawbacks. It could only hold about four minutes of sound and it was also difficult to amplify the sound to a large audience (Manley, 2011). In 1919, three Germans: Josef Engl, Joseph Masserole, and Hans Vogt also invented the Tri-Egon system which allowed sound to be recorded directly on film (Burns, 2013). With this system, a photo-electric cell was used to convert sound waves into light waves and recorded directly on the strip of film as the soundtrack. A projector equipped with a reader reconverted the light waves to sound for playback, while a special fly-wheel regulated the speed of the playback. This made it possible to have synchronised sound that ran for the entire length of the film (Burns, 2013; Karel, 1996). Warner Bros. Pictures, an American film company also developed the Vitaphone in 1926 (Dibbits, 1999). Vitaphone was another sound-on-disc system that recorded film soundtracks (Burns, 2013). While Tri-Egon became the dominant sound film process in Germany and much of Europe, Vitaphone was the most commercially successful American patent (Gomery, 2004).



Figure 2 *A Vitaphone projection setup at a 1926 demonstration*
(Source: History Department at the University of San Diego, PD-PRE1978)

Crafton (1999) maintains that the transition from silent cinema to talkies evolved in three stages: invention, innovation and diffusion. The invention phase covered the period the studios experimented with the various sound technologies, while the innovation phase saw the film studios committing to producing films that had synchronised sound. The diffusion phase describes the release of talkies nationally and internationally as well as the wiring of theatres for the new sound technology. Doyle (2010) has criticised the three-phase transition outlined by Crafton (1999) indicating that the transition process was not a “smooth exercise” (p.12). He explains that one area in the execution process that went wrong was the voices of the characters during the lip-sync recorded performances. While many movie-goers were initially excited about the idea of hearing the voices of their

favourite characters, they were also disappointed when the actions of the characters did not match their voices. This was known as the “talkie terror” in the history of filmmaking (Doyle, 2010; p.13).

The introduction of talkies also saw the emergence of new set of actors and actresses. The faces on the sound screen, compared to that of the silent screen became noticeably different. Lillian Gish, Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, Louise Brooks, and Charlie Chaplin were the first generation of Hollywood royalty that emerged with the silent films. However, after the introduction of sound, their careers would severely diminish, at least on-screen (Morgenroth, 1995). Charlie Chaplin’s productivity halted to a couple of films per decade; Lillian Gish worked mainly on the stage, and later on television, returning to the cinema only on rare occasions; Mary Pickford and Louise Brooks gave up after a few sound pictures, as did Douglas Fairbanks (Branigan, 1992; Morgenroth, 1995). Comedians such as Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd and Harry Langdon were still active during the talking era, however their status was marginal compared with their hay-days in the silent era (Branigan, 1992; Morgenroth, 1995). The silent-to-sound transition did not only affect the stars, it also ushered in a new breed of directors who had experience and a better understanding of the power of voice (Doyle, 2010). Musicians who had played during the silent films also found themselves out of work and replaced with recorded music (Branigan, 1992).

2.1.3 Digital Films

A number of scholars have described the emergence of digital technologies in Film Studies as revolutionary (Grusin, 2007; Hu, 2016; Spicer, 2012). According to Beth (2016),

ever since motion picture was invented in the 1890s, the use of photochemical images stored on strips of celluloid with the support of a projector has been the traditional process of filmmaking. However, this celluloid method otherwise known as analogue films has been diminishing in prominence. Today, most films are either shot entirely digitally or going through a digital intermediate process.

The analogue camera which was used in the past, could record only a limited shooting time frame. Besides, these cameras were heavy and as such could not be controlled by one hand in some special shooting scenes (Hu, 2016). The digital camera on the other hand is highly precise computerised equipment that allows cameramen to record for hours (Thursby, 2009). Professional digital camera manufacturers such as Arriflex, Sony and RED have all developed small and handheld models that allow filmmakers to make steady moves even with one hand (Dongli, 2013). It took directors shooting with the analogue camera usually a day to see full details of scenes they had shot. Today, with the advent of digital technology, directors and cameramen can get the actual details and effects of scenes shot instantly via the external monitors of digital video cameras (James, 2005).

Another area in film production that has seen the impact of digital technologies is the creation of special effects (Hu, 2016; Purse, 2013). Before the development of digital technology, filmmakers used costumes and props to create special effects in films. With the emergence of digital technologies, the film special effect industry relies on computer graphics technology in creating virtual characters and scenes (Beth, 2016; Hu, 2016). To produce a virtual character, a graphic representation of the character is created with the aid of a computer software programme. A motion capture scanner is then used to assemble the real person's actions which is later synthesised with the virtual character. This enables the

virtual character to move and behave the same way as the real person (Hu, 2016). For example, in the Hollywood film *Life of Pi* (2012) which won the Best Film Award at the 2012 Oscar's, there were lots of scenes of endless ocean and a beautiful island in the film. These scenes were not shot in real places. They were virtual scenes built with computer graphics. Indeed, to achieve that degree of reality, the film director, Ang Lee had to observe the tiny differences between live-action and computer graphics scenery for a long period of time in order to integrate the two perfectly ("Rhythm & Hues Makes Skies Soar", 2012).



Figure 3 A person being scanned for the creation of a virtual character

(Source: <http://www.bright.nl/node/462>)

2.1.4 Digital Fil Distribution

According to Spicer (2012), we are living in an era where film exist in a distributed form, circulating in various guises across a range of different media and where the socio-cultural ritual of watching a theatrically projected film is being replaced by viewers interacting with digital film in various locations. In the past, films were delivered to cinemas by distributors through simple means of transportation. At the time, the films had

many reels and ought to be contained in a special large box. It made transportation difficult (Hills & Sexton, 2015). Digital distribution however, has made it possible for films to be encrypted and stored on high-capacity hard disks. It also eliminated the challenges of transportation and made it possible for audiences across the globe to watch films through different digital platforms. The emergence of digital platforms like Netflix and Hulu are leading examples (Hu, 2016). Through digital networks and satellites, the transmission of films has also become easier than before. In 2002, prior to the official release of *Star Wars Episode III, Revenge of the Sith*, the Culver City digital film laboratory in California transmitted a teaser of the film to a centre in Singapore. It took only 10 minutes to complete the transmission. In the past, the transportation of film was not only time constrained; it also required lots of labour and money (Jieyi, 2011).

Opportunities for film consumption have also expanded significantly (Aveyard, 2016). This has made it possible for films to be watched in more places than ever before – from film theatres to the temporary sites of film festivals and other pop-up cinemas, domestic spaces such as living rooms and bedrooms, in transit planes, trains, buses and many more places (Aveyard, 2016). Theatrical release of films is still considered important, both in terms of the revenue it generates as well as a means of establishing market awareness with consumers. However, a large proportion of a film's revenue is now earned from viewing outside of the cinema (Hu, 2016). Caldwell (2009) confirms that only about fifteen per cent of film's revenue comes from its theatrical release. This is because new forms of film that are accessible outside the cinema have emerged. These include the director's *cut*, the animated prequel, the film's website with various extras and the digital video discs (DVD) releases that incorporate additional materials such as deleted scenes

(Anderson, 2009). A generation of film viewers is also looking to the internet as an unlimited warehouse for digital versions of films that can be downloaded on demand onto home computers (Tryon, 2009). Klinger (2006) notes that in the 21st century, film consumption is centered more in homes due to video-on-demand (VOD).

VOD as a service exists since the nineties (Ling, 1999) and refers to an interactive system that allows viewers to select a film from a database and watch it on their television or personal computer (Klinger, 2006). VOD systems provide content over a network, by sending it to a PC or a set-top-box linked to a television set. This can work either via downloads or streaming. The difference for the user is that with download, the entire film or program first has to be stored on the set-top-box or the computer. With streaming, the content is streamed to the user, who can watch it immediately as the video streams starts (Broeck, Pierson & Lievens, 2007). The latter is the main reason why the majority of the cable and telecom companies use the streaming technique when offering VOD services (Broeck et al., 2007). With VOD, viewers have the ability to fast forward, rewind, pause or enable slow motion, rapid scanning and subtitling in the film (Zhu, 2001). Some VOD services, such as Netflix, use a subscription model that requires users to pay a monthly fee to access a bundled set of content, which is mainly films and television shows. Other services, such as YouTube, use an advertising-funded model, where access to most content is provided at no charge; some premium content requires a subscription (Klinger, 2006).

Barlow (2005) is of the view that digital videos in general alter the way in which a film is experienced by the viewer. It promotes modes of attention and engagement that differ significantly from seeing a film in the theatres. Digital videos especially VOD intrinsically has a great impact on the viewing patterns of people (Broeck et al., 2007). It

has extended the possibilities in filmmaking, offering viewers the possibility to watch what they want and when they want it (Broeck et al., 2007).

2.2 Africa and Film

Macedo (2017) suggests that a critical examination of Africa and film would require an expedition to the past to ascertain the emergence of cinema in Africa. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, European powers targeted Africa for resource, territorial and cultural colonisation. By the early twentieth century, most of Africa, with the exception of Ethiopia and Liberia, were under the control of European powers (Garuba & Himmelman, 1994). Landau (2002) explains that during the colonial era, there were two forms of Western contact with Africans. The first was actual contact which included trading, negotiating and evangelising. The second was the virtual contact which involved photographs, words in literature, and images projected on screens. Landau (2002) further explains that the virtual interface positioned Europeans as spectators and Africans as objects to be observed. For the most part, it was through images and the written words that most Europeans knew anything about the places their countrymen were busily ruling. The cinema, specifically, was heavily relied upon for European colonial administration and expansion (Landau, 2002). Awindor (2017) asserts that colonial masters used cinema as a mechanism to infiltrate and influence the native culture. The British colonial government, for example, knowing the power of films in governance and culture, commissioned a colonial film unit in all their territories. The purpose for these film units was “to civilize Africa” (Foluke, 2014; p.4). According to Awindor (2017), colonial cinema was used to emphasise white supremacy and subjugation of the colonies.

Shaka (1999) avers that the first significant contact that any African had with cinema production was via an experiment conducted by the British Colonial office known as the Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment (BEKE). BEKE, which operated from 1935 – 1937, had a sole assignment: to produce and show instructional films, particularly those related to health care, to Africans. Ukadike (2003) believes that BEKE served as a training programme for Africans through cinema production.

The period of European decolonisation began to take place in Africa during the second half of the 20th century. Decolonisation encouraged the arrival of two differing trends in the representation of Africa in films. First, there was a stark decline in European films about Africa and then second, the African cinema emerged (Oscherwitz, 1999). Harrow (2007) explains that while African film pioneers began making films in the 1920s in Tunisia and Egypt, in sub-Saharan Africa, cinema first appeared in 1955, when a group of African students in Paris produced the short fiction film *Afrique sur Seine*. However, it was not until the 1960s, before many African countries began the independence processes that African cinema truly began to develop in Africa (Oscherwitz, 1999). The first film produced in sub-Saharan Africa by an African was *Borom Saret* (1962), directed by Sembene Ousmane (Harrow, 2007).

During the pioneering years of African cinema, the aspirations of its first filmmakers was one that revolted against colonialism, neocolonialism, dependency and Eurocentrism (Ukadike, 2003). As Oscherwitz (1999) states, the pioneering African filmmakers' major concerns were to provide more realistic images of Africa from an African standpoint, completely oppositional to the stereotypical and distorted expressions of the dominant themes of cinemas that were grounded in colonial thought and rationale.

According to Harrow (2007), the general sentiment of early African filmmakers was that they could not afford to create “subjective explorations of individual sensibilities and personal relations” as the European cinemas did (p.22). Thus, through the early 1980s, politically conscious films constituted the majority of African produced films. However, toward the end of the 20th century, a new wave of African filmmakers emerged and shifted away from the didactic formulas of their predecessors to more narrative practices that aimed at “entertainment over instruction” (Ukadike, 2003; p.126).

Cinema gained momentum throughout the second half of the 20th century and film production became a tool harnessed for the advancement of political, social and cultural development throughout the world (Mbe, 2011). However, because exhibition and distribution were still controlled by dominant cinemas of the West, very little of what African cinema produced was shown to global audiences (Stam & Shohat, 2014). Stam and Shohat (2014) indicate that there exists a sense of media imperialism at the global front which allows Western media contents to dominate what is seen by majority of the world. Thus, while Africans were able to utilise film as a tool for self-representation, Western audiences’ perceptions of Africa were still influenced almost entirely by the images produced by Western media sources that contributed very little to overcoming African cultural stereotypes (Stam & Shohat, 2014).

2.3 Stereotypes in Western Media Representations of Africa

The phenomenon of stereotyping has been studied since the early 1990s (Allport, 1954 as cited in Brink & Nel, 2015). According Blum to (2004), stereotype is the belief that all people within the same racial, ethnic or cultural group will act alike and share the

same beliefs and attitudes. Pickering (2015) avers that stereotyping often involves the representation and evaluation of a group of people in ways that ratifies and endorses negativity about the said group.

A number of studies have established that since the era of slavery and colonisation, Western media have portrayed Africa in a stereotypical manner (Biko, Gore & Watson, 2000; Michira, 2002; Oguh, 2012). Biko et al. (2000) analysed *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* coverage of Africa between the March and mid-August, 2000 and found that out of 89 stories, 84% of them were negative stories. Indeed, the negative stories on Africa in Western media have essentially turned the continent into a one-sided story. There are hardly any other stories about Africa except stories of war, danger, darkness, violence, poverty, disease, and hopelessness (Michira, 2002; Oguh, 2012). In explaining the persistence of negative stereotypes of Africa in Western media, Poncian (2015) states that European colonial powers created and disseminated negative images about Africa in order to justify their activities and domination of Africa. Nonetheless, given the fact that these negative images still persist even in the 21st century, Poncian (2015) observes that other factors beyond colonial portrayal of Africans could be responsible for the phenomenon. Indeed, several scholars (Moeller, 1999; Poncian, 2015) have proffered diverse reasons why the negative images of Africa continue to be propagated in Western media.

Moeller (1999) for example, has outlined commercial benefits as one of the reasons why negative images of Africa continue to fester in Western media. As stated by Moeller (1999), Western news outlets sensationalise Africa and other developing regions to command large audience attention for advertising purposes (Michira, 2002; Moeller,

1999). The activities of the film industry have also contributed to the negative representations of Africa in Western media (Cole, 2018; Manlove, 2012). Marco (2018) lists some of these Western films to include: *The Gods Must Be Crazy II* (1989), *Sarafina* (1992), *Black Hawk Down* (2001), *Tears of the Sun* (2003), *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), *The Last King of Scotland* (2006) and *Blood Diamond* (2006). Manlove (2012) points out that Western films such as the ones listed above portray Africans as savages, lazy natives, childlike, needy recipients of Western aid, helpless victims unable to progress or be agents of their own change and above all fanatic allies of the West.

Western academic analysis and writings about Africa have also produced and continue to fuel distorted images of the African life and culture (Poncain, 2015). Poncian (2015) argues that numerous Western books have cover images and titles which paint a negative image of Africa even if the writers do not intend to malign the continent. Examples of such books are: *The Trouble with Africa* (Calderisi, 2007), *Africa in Chaos* (Ayittey, 1999), *Africa Betrayed* (Ayittey, 1992) and *No Refuge: The Crisis of Refugee Militarization in Africa* (Muggah, 2006).

Berndt (2018) points out that some West African Literature in English – a term generally used to label literary traditions within five African countries with a tradition in Anglophone writing: Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone – have equally contributed to the distorted images of Africa. The aforementioned works by Ayittey (1992; 1999) are classical examples. Ayittey 's (1992; 1999) is a Ghanaian and his works have its place in West African Literature in English. However, Berndt (2018) contends that even though the works of Ayittey (1992; 1999) can be classified under West African Literature, these works were published in London and widely circulated in Europe. Michira (2002)

also makes similar arguments West African writings published and widely circulated in Europe. According to Michira (2002) these West African writings often portray the African continent as wild and exotic with jungles and animals taking the center stage.

Hagos (2000) on the other hand, is of the view that the activities of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have perhaps been the utmost reason for the persistence of negative images of Africa in Western media. The activities of NGOs and other humanitarian institutions also result in the phenomenon of negative images of Africa in Western media (Hagos, 2000; Poncian, 2015). Poncian (2015) notes that most NGOs, in their quest to raise funds for their administrative and humanitarian activities, strategically use images of child soldiers, emaciated children and slums to prompt viewers in Western countries to donate funds.

Hagos (2000) further argues that Africa receives wide and extensive media coverage in Western press only when the events suit their government's foreign policy or strategic interests. In keeping with the global anti-terrorism policy of the United States government (and most other Western countries), Western media focus on events in Africa such as Boko Haram in northern Nigeria, Al Shabab militants in Somalia and Islamic State militants in Libya (Hagos, 2000). The worldwide media attention that some West African countries received during the Ebola crisis in 2014 goes to reaffirm how the Western press focuses on events in Africa that suit their government's strategic interests (Ogun, 2015).

Whereas many of the studies conducted on Western media representations of Africa used the broad word "negative" to group all Western media stereotypes of Africa (Biko et al., 2000; Michira, 2002; Oguh, 2012), Harth (2012) however, has categorised stereotypes on Africa commonly used by Western media into what she describes as "the ten myths" (p.

11). Harth (2010) outlines the myths to include: the myth of lack of progress; the myth of timeless present; the myth of primitive or exotic; the myth of tradition or ritual; the myth of lack of history; the myths of African continuity; the myths about Africa's geography; the myths about Africa's population; the myths about poverty; the myths about Africa's hopelessness.

The myth of lack of progress promotes the idea that Africans are backward and isolated from global processes without any significant contributions to technology, trade, art, history, or politics. The myth of timeless present promotes the idea that Africa is a place that has not evolved and remains largely unchanged compared to other developed places in Europe and America (Harth, 2012; Michira, 2002). The myth of the primitive or exotic signifies that the customs, culture, and traditions in Africa are often regarded as almost primitive, and subtly inferior. It may appear as if Western media may be celebrating African heritage with these kinds of stereotypes, but the underlying message may be celebrating African inferiority (Harth, 2012; Oguh, 2015). The myth of tradition or ritual recognises African traditions, ceremonies and rituals as static, constant or unchanging rather than dynamic (Harth, 2012; Michira, 2002). The myth of African continuity points to a homogenous and undifferentiated Africa. Thus, Western media do not normally regard Africans as different from one another (Harth, 2012; Michira, 2002; Oguh, 2015). The myths of lack of history state that since Africa is a static place, it cannot have history because history changes over time (Harth, 2012). According to this myth, Africa's history emerged from colonisation (Harth, 2012; Michira, 2002; Oguh, 2015). The myths about Africa's geography suggest that Africa is a jungle or desert without modern cities. However, this notion is simply erroneous because only five percent of Africa's landmass

is considered to be a jungle or desert (Harth, 2012; Oguh, 2015). The myths about Africa's population promote two contradictory notions that Africa is either over-populated or under-populated. In the first notion, Africa is portrayed as over-populated because of excessive childbearing arising from irresponsible and uncontrolled sexual activity. The second notion suggests that Africa is under-populated because many people are dying of killer diseases such as Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). However, these notions are inaccurate (Oguh, 2015). Firstly, the notion that Africa is overpopulated is simply wrong: the population density for Africa is about 65 people per square mile while the population density of the United States is 76 people per square mile and the population density of Asia is two hundred and three people per square mile. Secondly, the notion that Africa is under-populated because of AIDS and other deadly diseases fails to acknowledge the largely successful efforts of African governments, supported by international aid agencies, in tackling killer diseases (Oguh, 2015). The myth about poverty in Africa promotes the idea that most Africans are poor and helpless except for corrupt generals or politicians and business people. However, the reality is that Africa has a diverse distribution of wealth. Indeed, about 50 percent of sub-Saharan Africa's population lives on less than \$1.25 per day, according to the World Bank (Harth, 2012; Oguh, 2015). Nonetheless sub-Saharan Africa's middle class has tripled in the last 30 years, reaching 35% of the population, according to figures from Deloitte and Touche (2012). The myth about Africa's hopelessness evidences itself when Western media portrays Africa as a lost cause, or Africa cannot be a valuable part of global decision making (Harth, 2012; Oguh, 2015).

Several scholars dismissed the arguments that Western media creates and propagates stereotypes about Africa (Guest, 2004; Scott, 2009). According Guest (2004),

the reason why Western media reports that Africa is plagued by war, famine and pestilence is because Africa is plagued by war, famine and pestilence. He adds that Western media will stop reporting on these stories when the stories of war, famine and pestilence in Africa stops being true. Poncian (2015) also states that Africans, rather than Westerners, are to be blamed for the negative and stereotypical portrayal of Africa in Western media. The author states that although war, political instabilities and corruption does not define Africa in its entirety, the fact that these events still occur negatively affects the perceptions of the continent.

2.4 Ideology and Film

Ideology is an integral component of media representation. However, it is rare to begin an analysis without first acknowledging the plurality of different ways media scholars have conceptualised the term ideology (Eagleton, 1991). Ideology is decidedly a complicated term (Croteau & Hoynes, 2018). Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels used it as a broad term to describe an imaginary world of ideas; later Marxists often used it to denote the covert projection of the worldviews of the powerful as the universally accepted norm; political scientists use it to signify packages of positions, often believed to be unifiable in a single preferred optimal state, and, of course, many of people use it to mean the beliefs, attitudes and opinions of those with whom they disagree (Croteau & Hoynes, 2018; Eagleton, 1991; Martin, 2015).

Most media scholars believe that media texts offer ways of seeing the world. These texts help to define the world and provide models for appropriate behaviour and attitudes (Croteau & Hoynes, 2018; Hall, 2013; Lang & Lang, 2009). According to Lang and Lang

(2009), the proliferation of mass media in contemporary societies has accentuated the pervasive nature of media texts in the production and exchange of meanings on a daily basis. Mass media are often considered as principal sites where ideological warfare is waged (Hall, 2013). The ideological warfare is a clash or disagreement of opposing ideals or concepts through which certain individuals or groups use “strategic influence” to promote their interests (Echevarria, 2008; p.63). The “battle space” of this conflict is the target population’s “hearts and minds”, while the “weapons” can include, among other sources, think tanks, television programs, newspaper articles, the internet, official government policy papers, radio broadcasts and/or films (Echevarria, 2008; p.63). From this perspective, ideology is related to concepts such as ‘worldviews’, ‘belief system’ and ‘values’ (Croteau & Hoynes, 2018; Pearson & Simpson, 2001). Thus, when scholars examine media products to uncover their ‘ideology,’ they are interested in the underlying viewpoints, belief systems and values in these media texts (Croteau & Hoynes, 2018; Pearson & Simpson, 2001).

Films, as with all media products, reflect certain values and ways of interpreting the world (Croteau & Hoynes, 2018). Films translate representations, discourses and myths of everyday life into cinematic terms (Kellner & Ryan, 1988 as cited in Ye, 2012). Most media ideological analyses in films focus on the inherent meanings in stories the images tell (Ye, 2012).

According to Combs and Combs (2013), a film is a sum total of the maker’s attitudes, beliefs, political, social and cultural positions. These positions could be visible or deeply embedded in the film in a way that seems natural. More often, filmmakers identify a position about a certain social reality. This position then becomes the ideology

of the film (Combs, 2013). Thus, films, like all media texts are considered to be “purveyors of ideology” (Croteau & Hoynes, 2018; p.161).

Some scholars have argued that films cater for the prevailing ideology of the moment (Kellner & Ryan, 1988; Ukadike, 2003; Ye, 2012). Films produced in post-colonial Africa for example, catered for the ideology of the time – colonialism, neocolonialism, dependency and Eurocentrism (Ukadike, 2003). The situation was not different in the Western worlds. Kellner and Ryan, 1988 as cited in Ye, (2012) outline how Hollywood films from the 1960s to the present day were closely connected to the political movements and struggles of the time. Their narrative mapped the rise and decline of 1960s radicalism; the failure of liberalism and rise of the *New Right* in the 1970s; and the triumph and hegemony of the Right in the 1980s. The scholars also note how Hollywood films reflect the discourses of the anti-war, *New Left* student movements, as well as the feminists, black power, sexual liberationist, and counter-cultural movements, and produced a new type of socially critical Hollywood film.

However, the debate between those who argue that film promote the worldview of the powerful in society which is also referred to as the dominant ideology and those who argue that film expresses both the dominant ideology as well as, some challenging worldviews has gain prominence in research studies (Croteau & Hoynes, 2018; Hunter, 1991; Tagudina, 2012). A study conducted Tagudina (2012) reveals that filmic texts can be understood in ideological terms, as forms of communication that privilege certain sets of ideas and neglect or undermine others. According to Tagudina (2012), the powerful in society own the film production sites. They use the films (like other media products) as an important apparatus in imposing their thoughts on the public. The films also help to

maintain social control by formatting social thought according to the ideology of the powerful in society (Tagudina, 2012). In fact, public opinion is not the voice of society; it is the voice of the powerful in society who uses their control of the media and by extension, films to exert and engineer social consent (Yilmaza & Kirazoluğub, 2014; Tagudina, 2012). Hunter (1991) on the contrary, maintains that film is only a media apparatus where cultural contests over meaning are waged rather than as a provider of some univocal articulation of ideology. In other words, different ideological perspectives, representing different interests with unequal power, engage in a kind of struggle within media texts. Some ideas will have the advantage – because, for example, they are perceived as popular or build on familiar media images – and others will be barely visible, lurking around the margins for discovery by those who look carefully (Hunter, 1991 as cited in Croteau & Hoynes, 2018). For those engaged in the promotion of particular ideas, including such diverse groups as politicians, corporate actors, citizen activists, and religious groups, film are among the primary contemporary battlegrounds (Croteau & Hoynes, 2018). Film, in fact, are at the center of what Hunter (1991) describes as “culture wars” in contemporary societies, in which fundamental issues of morality are being fought (p. 23). The morality of abortion, homosexuality, racism, materialism and patriarchy is debated, often in very polarised terms, in the mass media as cultural conservatives and cultural progressives alike use various media technologies (including films) to promote their positions (Croteau & Hoynes, 2018).

Nevertheless, the films are not simply conduits for carrying competing messages; they are more than just the battlefield on which cultural warfare takes place as indicated by Hunter (1991). Much of the substance of the contemporary cultural warfare is about the

acceptability of the images that films disseminate (Croteau & Hoynes, 2018). One of the principal reasons why images in films often become so debatable is that they are believed to promote ideas that are objectionable (Yılmaz & Kirazoluğub, 2014). In short, few critics are concerned about filmic texts that promote perspectives they support (Yılmaz & Kirazoluğub, 2014). Ideological analysis in films, then, often goes hand in hand with political advocacy, as critics use their detection of distorted messages to make their own ideological points. As a result, exploring the ideologies of films can be very tricky (Yılmaz & Kirazoluğub, 2014). Ideological analysis in films (just as with other media texts), therefore, examines the stories the films tell as well as the potential contradictions within the filmic texts, that is, the places where alternative perspectives might reside or where ideological conflict is built into the text (Croteau & Hoynes, 2018; Yılmaz & Kirazoluğub, 2014).

2.5 Theoretical Framework

2.5.1 Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonialism is an umbrella term used to describe a set of theories and practices that seek to explore the legacies of colonialism in present day (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). Claiming a single theorist or author as the originator of an entire field is usually a gross oversimplification of the truth. However, Said's (1978) work *Orientalism* can certainly lay claim to popularising some of the key ideas which now sits as the foundation of postcolonial theory. Said (1978) argues that if a certain group within a society has more political or economic power, they will likely also have more power in deciding the culture of that society. Said (1978) thus, indicates that as a consequence of many years of colonial

rule, the West – a term largely used to refer to nations that were never colonised, has had more power in dictating global culture than the East – a term which is also largely used to refer to nations that were colonised. The thrust in Said's (1978) thesis is that in a global culture dominated by the West, the East is often represented by the West as illogical, mysterious and driven by base human passions while the West is represented as logical, cultured and the ideal. In the view of Spivak (1988) as cited in Littlejohn and Foss (2009), the result of the West representing and defining the East was to constitute the colonial subject as 'other' – a term used to describe a person or a group of people different from the norm or the usual (Spivak, 1988 as cited in Littlejohn & Foss, 2009).

There are two foundational ideas at play in postcolonial theory. The first is the idea that the conception of the West and the East is a complete fabrication. According to Lull (2012), the idea of the West and the East is as much an idea as a fact of geography. The second is that this conception of the West and the East points to the manner in which this false binary has been used to portray the West as the norm and the East as the 'other' (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009).

In cultural text analysis, the notion of the 'other' has also been explored by Bary (1995) in a study on postcolonialism and Western cultural texts. In Barry's (1995) study, he lays out four characteristics of things that recur in postcolonial analysis. These are: representation of non-Western as 'other'; the use of language to subvert that power dynamic; hybrid identity; and cross-cultural collaborations. Following the ideas from Said (1978) and Spivak (1988), Barry (1995) explains that when analysing a cultural text through the prism of postcolonial theory, there is the need to examine whether the cultural text is supporting or contesting the notion of the West being central and normal as opposed

to non-Europeans or non-West being represented as the 'other.' Under colonialism, many colonised nations were forced to take on the language of the coloniser as their official language, particularly for education as well as, for the codification of law (Neimneh, 2013). Thus, the second characteristic of Barry (1995) postcolonial analysis recommends that when analysing a cultural text, there is the need to consider how language might be supporting or contesting the colonial legacy. The concept of hybrid identity stems from the Bhabha (1995) idea of mixing up cultures. Bhabha (1995) perceives colonialism as a mixing up of cultures of both the coloniser and that of the indigenous people who were colonised. Thus, the third characteristics of Barry's (1995) postcolonial analysis looks at how the effects of this mixed identity affect individual identity and the communal identity. Barry's (1995) fourth characteristics of postcolonial analysis highlights cross-cultural collaborations between non-Western piece of culture and Western cultural texts. According to Barry (1995), when a non-Western piece of culture is adapted into a Western cultural text, there is the need to consider who has agency or control over the creative process and where is the money flowing to? In other words, is the creative process is a subversion of the colonial power dynamics or not?

Marxist scholar, Chibber (2013) has critiqued some foundational logics of postcolonialism in his work *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital*. Chibber (2013) argues that the postcolonialism essentialises cultures, painting them as fixed and static categories. Moreover, it presents the difference between East and West as unbridgeable, hence denying people's "universal aspirations" and "universal interests" (p.38). He also criticised the postcolonial tendency to characterise all of enlightenment values as Eurocentric. According to him, the theory will be remembered for its revival of

cultural essentialism and its acting as an endorsement of orientalism (or the representation of non-Western cultures as illogical and mysterious), rather than being an antidote to it.

However, in spite of the aforementioned limitations outlined by Chibber (2013), Neimneh (2013) asserts that Postcolonialism, in its ability to react to colonial thinking and myths, is an apt theoretical approach when analysing Western cultural texts.

2.5.2 Stereotype Theory

Stereotypes are false or misleading generalisations about groups held in a manner that renders them largely, though not entirely, immune to counterevidence. Those who perpetuate stereotypes see the people they are stereotyping entirely in terms of generalised prescriptive assumptions about their biology, nationality, sexual orientation or age (Blum, 2004; Pickering, 2015).

Stereotypes in many cases endorse existing patterns of discrimination or inequality in society (Hinton, 2000). For this reason, those who generate and perpetuate stereotypes of others are usually in positions of greater power and status than those who are stereotyped (Beegly, 2015). Stereotypes do not only define and place others as inferior, but also implicitly affirm and legitimate those who stereotype in their own position and identity (Owen, 2012). Interestingly, those with relatively little power and status may also stereotype others, with those stereotyped serving as scapegoats for feelings of frustration, disaffection, or anger connected with this lack of power and status (Owen, 2012; Pickering, 2004).

Stereotypical beliefs or perceptions can be negative, positive or neutral (Mullins, 2010). A positive stereotype refers to a subjectively favourable belief held about a social

group. Common cases of positive stereotypes are for example, that the Asians are good mathematicians, that Africans are strong, and that women are more affectionate. A negative stereotype is related to discrimination, that is, negative behaviours directed toward individuals because of their group membership to a particular social group. A common example of a negative stereotype includes, for example, the notion that Africans are corrupt. Neutral stereotypes are neither favourable nor discriminatory. They are just generalised beliefs about a particular category of social group. For example, Australians like cricket (Mullins, 2010; Whitley & Kite, 2006).

Proponents of stereotype theories outline a tripartite approach that allows understanding on how the concept of stereotype works in society (Blum, 2004; Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick & Esses, 2010). The first part is the cognitive component. The cognitive component signifies how the mind allows people to recognise stereotypes because of a previous knowledge they had about the stereotyped group (Dovidio et al., 2010). According to Blum (2004), this cognitive process shapes people's perception of the stereotyped group into seeing the stereotypic characteristics even when they are not present. The second part of the tripartite approach involves an affective component where the feeling people experience in relation to a stereotype perception come to play (Blum, 2004; Dovidio et al., 2010). This affective experience can be negative, positive or neutral (Mullins, 2010; Whitley & Kite, 2006). The third part is the behaviour component. This stage involves the implementing actions associated with any of the aforementioned feeling experienced in the face of a particular stereotype (Blum, 2004; Dovidio et al., 2010).

Stereotypes are hard to change, but they are far from immutable (Bordalo, Coffman, Gennaioli & Shleifer, 2015). More recently, a rapid increase in the number of female

medical practitioners has coincided with shifting gender stereotypes in the medical profession (Bordalo et al., 2015). Medicine has historically been perceived as a stereotypical male profession, with women being viewed as less competent than their male counterparts (Bordalo et al., 2015). However, this stereotype has declined especially in specialties areas where women are more prevalent, such as pediatrics and dermatology. Today, the medical profession is viewed as gender neutral (Bordalo et al., 2015; Couch & Sigler 2001). These patterns reflect, at least in part, changes in stereotypes in response to changes in reality. In fact, studies conducted by Bordalo et al. (2015) and Schneider (2004) affirms that stereotypes change when individuals are faced with sufficiently pressing disconfirming information that ultimately alters their reality.

2.5.3 Hegemony

According to Croteau and Hoynes, (2018), in contemporary times, hegemony is the main theoretical driver in many research studies on ideology in media. The theory is attributed to Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist (Lull, 1995). While imprisoned for promoting and participating in subversive ideas against the government, Gramsci wrote a series of pamphlets called the *Prison Notebooks*. In them, he advanced the notion of hegemony (Lull, 1995).

The term hegemony originally known as ‘hegemonia’ originated from a Greek word which literally means the dominant and oppressive status of one element in a system over the others (Lull, 1995; Yilmaz, 2010). According Gramsci (1971) cited in Yilmaz (2010), the ruling class made up of individuals in positions of power and influence uses hegemonic

ideas to gain domination over the subjugated classes. These hegemonic ideas are not accomplished through using force or coercion. They were accomplished through securing consent from the masses of ordinary people. This consent was won by using the notion of ‘common sense.’ The notion of ‘common sense’ is used to frame the worldview of the ruling class as well as the social and economic structures as legitimately designed for the benefit of all, even though these structures may only benefit the ruling class (Böhm, 2018; Yilmaz, 2010). According to Croteau and Hoynes (2018), the ruling class uses the common sensical approach to maintain the status quo. The notion of ‘common sense’ is does not challenge but embraces them as natural because nature is regarded as more enduring and stable than the creations of human societies (Croteau & Hoynes, 2018). Thus, if social structures and social relationships are defined as natural, they take on a kind of permanency and legitimacy that elevates them to the realm of the uncontested (Riley, 2011). The idea of common sense prevents the masses of ordinary people from perceiving overarching institutional socio-economic exploitations by the ruling class (Hermann, 2016).

Gramsci also described how the powerful exercise this cultural leadership through institutions such as religion, education and media. He argued that society's intellectuals, often viewed as detached observers of social life, are actually embedded in a privileged social class and enjoy great prestige. As such, they function as the “deputies” of the ruling class, teaching and encouraging people to follow the norms and rules established by the ruling class (Gramsci, 1971 as cited Yilmaz, 2010; p. 3). Boothman (2008) emphasises that films as well as all media products are ideological apparatuses that subtly teach and encourage people to follow the norms and rules established by some of powerful people in

society. Thus, the more people watch films, the more the ideological tenets imbued in the films gradually becoming part of the cultural orientation of society.

2.6 Relevance of the Theories to the Study

The literature reviewed on Africa and film indicated that Afro-cultural representations in films have been keenly influenced by colonialism. The postcolonial theory therefore helped me in analysing and answering the research question on how the *Black Panther (2018)* film depicted Africa. It also enabled me to uncover the reasons behind the depictions. On the other hand, the stereotype theory as well as, the ideas from reviewed studies on stereotypes in Western media representations of Africa, provided the basis for analysing and answering the research question on how the *Black Panther (2018)* film addressed stereotypes in Western media representations of Africa. Finally, Antonio Gramsci's hegemony helped me in identifying the dominant ideologies embedded in the *Black Panther (2018)* film.

2.7 Summary

In reviewing of the literature, it was evident that film is a pervasive cultural tool with a unique ubiquity among human societies. Nonetheless, Western films on Africa have produced stereotypical images of the continent throughout the world. A number of reasons have accounted for this. One of them is the propensity to use films in waging ideological warfare in a way that seems natural and unnoticed. The study also discussed postcolonial theory, stereotype theory and theory of hegemony to highlight the legacy of colonialism in cultural texts, the structure of stereotypes and the notions of consent and common sense in

the ploy by the ruling groups in society to have their worldviews accepted by all respectively.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methods and procedures used in the collection and analysis of data for this study.

3.1 Research Approach

To understand wholly the meanings of the visual representations in the *Black Panther (2018)* film, this study adopts the qualitative research approach. According to Creswell (2014) qualitative research approach provides the methods for understanding the meanings a group of people ascribe to social practices within a definite historical or cultural context.

In qualitative research, the researcher's goal is to unveil the facts without interfering or manipulating the natural setting of the phenomenon of interest (Patton & Cochran, 2007). Lindlof and Taylor (2002) also acknowledge that qualitative research is concerned with analysing the situated form, content and lived experiences of social actors in words without subjecting them to mathematical or formal transformations. Similarly, this study was conducted in the natural context of the *Black Panther (2018)* film without any attempt whatsoever to manipulate or influence the film. The study also analysed the content of the *Black Panther (2018)* film in words without subjecting it to any statistical or mathematical interpretations.

3.2 Research Design

A research design is the strategy, plan and structure that characterises a research work. It is the logic that links the data to be collected and the answers to be given to the research questions (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2009). The research design involves setting the conditions for collecting and analysing data relevant to the researcher and the phenomenon of interest (Yin, 2009). This study employed qualitative content analysis as the research design on the basis that it provides the strategy, plan and structure that characterises this research work. The study also adopted qualitative content analysis because it served as the logical link that connects the data to be collected and the conclusions to be drawn to the research questions.

3.2.1 Qualitative Content Analysis

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) contend that qualitative content analysis is one of the research techniques appropriate for analysing visual texts. Zhang and Wildemuth (2005) also note that qualitative content analysis allows the researcher to understand social reality in a subjective yet scientific manner by examining the meanings and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a text. Zhang and Wildemuth (2005) further acknowledge that qualitative content analysis involves collecting suitable data and selecting the unit of analysis. The unit of analysis refers to the basic unit of text to be classified during content analysis (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2005).

Qualitative content analysis was adopted for this study because it allows the appreciation of meanings and patterns embedded in the *Black Panther (2018)* film. There

were 56 scenes in the *Black Panther* (2018) film and each scene constituted a unit of analysis for this study. The interpretations drawn from the *Black Panther* (2018) film were as a result of actively watching the film over and over again (eight times in all), moving back and forth through the scenes and decluttering the volume of data into core patterns and meanings. There was also a focus on in-depth descriptions of the embedded meanings from the *Black Panther* (2018) film (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2005).

3.3 Sampling Technique

Daymon and Holloway (2011) assert that qualitative approaches demand different sampling techniques from the randomly selected and probabilistic sampling which quantitative researchers generally use. The underlying principle of gaining rich and in-depth information generally guides the sampling strategies of qualitative researchers. Hence, under the qualitative research approach, the object or subject selected for the study, where and when, depends on certain criteria which are determined by the purpose of the study. The term *purposive* or *purposeful* sampling therefore is applied (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Lindlof and Taylor (2002) also note that no qualitative researcher can capture every event as it unfolds, thus the purposeful selection of data sites for a particular study. The two scholars further acknowledge that the right choice of a sampling strategy enables researchers to make a systematic contact with communicative phenomena with a minimum of wasted effort.

In line with the above assertions, purposive sampling was adopted for this study due to inability to capture every Western media depictions of Africa as they unfold. Hence, the *Black Panther* (2018) film was purposively selected to gain rich, in-depth

understanding of how the *Black Panther (2018)* film depicted Africa and addressed stereotypes in Western media representations of Africa, among others.

3.4 Data Collection Method

Qualitative researchers typically rely on four methods for gathering data: observational methods, group discussions, in-depth interviewing, and analysing documents and material culture (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Spencer & Snape, 2003). Even though other secondary and specialised methods of data sources supplement these four primary methods, they nonetheless, remain the core of qualitative inquiry ((Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Documents do not only contain words. A document can also contain photographs and motion images that have been recorded without a researcher's intervention (Bowen, 2009). This study however, employed document analysis as a data collection method to systematically evaluate how the *Black Panther (2018)* film constructs the social lives of Africans.

3.4.1 Document Analysis

According to Daymon and Holloway (2011), document analysis is an analytical research method that allows the researcher to carefully examine data in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge. The analytical procedure in document analysis entails finding, selecting, appraising and synthesizing the data contained in the document into themes or categories (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Analysing documents is a useful method because of its unobtrusive, non-reactive nature.

This makes the documents naturalistic and also possess a built-in level of authenticity (Leavy, 2014).

This study adopted the analytical procedure espoused by Daymon and Holloway (2011) which entails making sense of and producing rich descriptions from the meanings obtained from the *Black Panther (2018)* film. In line with the observation by Leavy (2014), concerning the unobtrusive, non-reactive nature of the document *Black Panther (2018)* film, it makes the document under study possess a naturally built-in level of authenticity.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

O’Leary (2014) offers two major techniques when conducting document analysis. One is the interview technique. This technique involves the researcher treating the document like a respondent or an informant that provides the researcher with relevant information (O’Leary, 2014). The other technique is by noting occurrences within a text. This technique involves the researcher analysing the data inductively building from particular to general, core occurrences within the text (O’Leary, 2014). This technique involves coding and category construction (Bowen, 2009; Creswell, 2014; O’Leary, 2014). At the outset of this study, to ensure authenticity of the document, the *Black Panther (2018)* film was purchased and downloaded from the Apple’s iTunes Store. The film was watched scene by scene in order to gain understanding to answer my research questions. To prevent distractions and other interruptions, I watched the film on my laptop, with an ear-piece plugged into my ears at a very cool, isolated corner in my room. This is in agreement with O’Leary’s (2014) technique of treating a document like a respondent or informant and asking questions that benefit the researcher.

In watching the *Black Panther (2018)* film, I always had a note pad where I put down the patterns in the film that were relevant to my study. I later typed all the condensed information from the film with Microsoft Office Word on my laptop and converted the Word documents into PDF files to prevent changes from being made to the data mistakenly. This is also in line with O’Leary (2014) second technique where the researcher organises the data using coding and category construction.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), data analysis is the process of labeling and breaking down raw data and reconstituting them into patterns, themes, concepts and propositions. In line with this, the data analysis for this study was done in order to draw patterns and themes from the data collected.

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in rich detail (Braun & Clark, 2013).

In this study, the data collected were analysed with the aim of identifying and reporting the trends and patterns that run through the data as indicated by Braun and Clark (2013). I initiated the data analysis process by watching the *Black Panther (2018)* film eight times in all, moving back and forth through the scenes in order to familiarise myself with the scenes and to gain an appreciation of the messages embedded in the film. Then, to answer RQ1 which sought to ask how the *Black Panther (2018)* film depicted Africa, the analysis commenced with assembling all the data from the scenes related to how the *Black Panther (2018)* film portrayed Africa. The data was then analysed

inductively, building upon themes obtained from each scene of the *Black Panther (2018)* film to themes that traverse across all the scenes. It involved coding and category construction (Bowen, 2009; Creswell, 2014; O’Leary, 2014). I therefore ensured that excerpts from the film were used to support the detailed descriptions and discussions of the specific research question. The descriptive part of the first research question was however grouped into the following themes: *contradictory terms, hybrid culture and appropriated culture*. This is in line with the views expressed by Creswell (2014) which indicates that in analysing data, the researcher needs to winnow the information gathered. The impact of this process is to aggregate data into small number of themes.

Since I am an African and my study sought to analyse a Western media representation of Africa, I had to bracket myself in order to prevent my biases from affecting the findings of the research work. Bracketing one’s biases, according to Bertelsen (2005) involves the researcher creating a distance from previously held assumptions, prejudices or theories and basing interpretations solely on immediate insights into the phenomena themselves. Consequently, the interpretations in this research work were solely on the immediate insight from *Black Panther (2018)* film. As the researcher, I did not carry any previously held assumption or prejudice into the findings of this work. The data collected for RQ2 and RQ3 were as well grouped into relevant themes. The following themes were developed for RQ2 and RQ3 respectively: *science and technology, economic independence, gender equity and cultural homogeneity* as well as, *Afrofuturism, neo-liberalism and pan-Africanism*.

During the interpretative process, I looked out for issues that were raised in the scenes and how these issues related to one another; meanings were then drawn with the aid

of the theories underpinning this study. Excerpts from the *Black Panther* (2018) film were also used to support the analysis and discussions.

3.7 Ethical Issues

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that seeks to address questions of morality (Jennings, 2003). Morality refers to beliefs or standards about concepts like good and bad, right and wrong (Jennings, 2003). When used as the basis for guiding individual and collective behaviour, ethics takes on a normative function, helping individuals consider how they should behave from a moral perspective (Vanclay, Baines & Taylor, 2013). Ethical issues arise in all forms of professional practice. Academic research in various disciplines also encounters ethical issues (Halai, 2006).

According to Halai (2006), a sound research is a moral and ethical endeavour. In like manner, a research study is expected to demonstrate objectivity and sensitivity in the selection and analysis of data (Bowen, 2009). Furthermore, the ethical principles: respect for participants and informed consent, are the foundational principles from which all other ethical considerations cascade down (Vanclay, Baines & Taylor, 2013). Creswell (2014) asserts that deception occurs when the researcher does not disclose the purpose of the study to the participants.

Vanclay, Baines & Taylor (2013) also note that a research study must be fully disclose all the methods and analytical procedures used for the study to enable replication of the research by another researcher; enable peer review of the adequacy and ethicality of the methodology; and to encourage critical self-reflection on the limitations of the methodology and any implications for the results and conclusions.

In view of these ethical principles outlined in the preceding paragraphs, this research work first and foremost, was conducted in a fair and objective manner without any attempt to manipulate the data collected. Secondly, the study did not require the involvement of participants since it only involved the researcher content-analysing all 56 scenes in the *Black Panther (2018)* film. As such, there was no need to either seek the consent of any participants or disclose the purpose of the study to the participants. Thirdly, this research work fully outlines all the various steps, ways, and means through which the data collection was done and applied. It chronicles in full, the methods and procedures used in the collection and analysis of the data on how the *Black Panther (2018)* film depicted Africa, addressed stereotypes in Western media representations of Africa as well as, identified the dominant ideologies embedded in the film. Similarly, it discusses the principles and assumptions that underpin the methods and procedures and most notably, the rationale behind their selection.

3.8 Trustworthiness

Anney (2014) in his research paper found that most students at the University of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania in their dissertation employed the quantitative trustworthiness criteria such as reliability and validity to assess the accuracy of qualitative inquiry. Creswell (2014) is however of the view that the meaning that validity and reliability carry in qualitative research is different from what they connote in quantitative research. Thus, validity in qualitative research is geared towards determining the accuracy and truthfulness in research findings.

Hence, Anney (2014) suggests that researchers should rather consider dependability (in preference to reliability), credibility (in preference to internal validity), transferability (in preference to external validity) and confirmability (in preference to objectivity) as trustworthiness criteria for qualitative investigation as propounded by Lincoln and Guba (2000).

3.8.1 Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (2000) argue that ensuring credibility is one of most important factors in establishing trustworthiness in a research work. Creswell (2014) provides eight validation strategies in testing for the validity in a qualitative research. These processes include triangulation, using member-checking to determine accuracy on the part of participants, using rich and thick descriptions, presenting negative case analysis, spending prolonged time at the research field, using peer debriefing, using external auditors and bracketing of biases. He further states that qualitative researchers should adopt at least two of these strategies in their studies. This research work applied two of these strategies in other not to affect the objectivity of the analysis as well as the interpretation of the data. I bracketed my biases by distancing myself from previously held assumptions or prejudices and basing interpretations solely on immediate insight into the phenomena themselves as recommended by Bertelsen (2005). In addition, in answering the research questions, I adopted rich and thick descriptions to describe the scenes and activities in the *Black Panther (2018)* film in order to paint a vivid and thorough picture of how the *Black Panther (2018)* film depicted Africa, addressed stereotypes in Western media representations of Africa and identified the dominant ideologies embedded in the film.

3.9 Summary

This chapter presented the process of the research and the method of data analysis. The researcher adopted a qualitative content analysis to investigate how the *Black Panther (2018)* film depicted Africa, among others. Using document analysis, the researcher collected data from all 56 scenes in the *Black Panther (2018)* film. In addressing ethical issues, the study did not involve any participants since researcher solely analysed the scenes in the *Black Panther (2018)* film in a fair and objective manner. Finally, the entire chapter was subjected to the following outline: research approach; research design; sampling techniques; data collection methods and procedures; ethical issues, and credibility of the study.



CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This is a detailed presentation of the findings from the data collected from the *Black Panther* (2018) film. The research questions posed at the beginning of the study are answered in this section by reducing data obtained into themes and analysing them using the theories and earlier works discussed specifically on the *Black Panther* (2018) film, Western Media Representations of Africa as well as ideology and film.

4.1 RQ1. How does the *Black Panther* (2018) film depict Africa?

The concept of depiction signifies that everything we see in films or in any other media product has been socially constructed (Lamb, 2013; Rowe, 1996). Even though these images may sometimes seem realistic, they are only constructions of reality and not reality itself (Schudson, 2003). Films go through the process of selection, omission and construction. It is often said that the camera never lies, however, before a filmmaker sets out to produce a film, they select the story they want the film to tell and, in the process, they also decide what to omit or exclude from the story. These decisions influence the meaning the film creates (Clarke, 2008; Rowe, 1996).

Early pictures of Africans in Hollywood films included criminals, slaves, nannies, servants, and blackface, a theatrical make-up used predominantly by non-black performers to represent a caricature of a black person (Ukadike, 2003). Historically, Western films about Africa are said to employ codes or symbols to reinforce colonial divides between the West and Africa (Macedo, 2017). These codes or symbols take the form of words, sounds,

gestures, ideas or visual images. They can also be either connotative or denotative. The connotative meaning of a code or symbol refers to the cultural associations to that code while the denotative meaning is its literal meaning (Clarke, 2008; Lamb, 2013; Rowe, 1996).

With the *Black Panther* (2018) film reportedly being Hollywood's biggest commercial representation of Africa in modern history (Strong & Chaplin, 2019), this research question therefore sought to identify and interrogate the themes that run through how the *Black Panther* (2018) film depicted Africa. A thorough coding of the 56 scenes in the film revealed that the *Black Panther* (2018) film used the following themes to depict Africa: *advanced society, primordial society, hybrid identity and cultural appropriation*. Using the postcolonial theory, these themes are critically analysed to explain how Africa was depicted.

4.1.1 Contradictory Terms

The theme of contradictory terms highlights two subthemes: advanced society and primordial society.

4.1.1.1 Advanced Society

The theme of advanced society points to a highly industrialised and technologically developed human society (Miller, 2010). Mostly, the criteria for evaluating an advanced society includes gross domestic product (GDP), gross national product (GNP), the per capita income, level of industrialisation, amount of widespread infrastructure and general standard of living (Dreyer, 2015). However, for this particular theme, the key indicators

were scenes in the *Black Panther* (2018) film that depicted Africa as a technological, infrastructural and military powerhouse.

The data obtained revealed that Wakanda which was a fictional nation in Africa was depicted as the most technologically advanced and prosperous nation on Earth. With no history of colonisation, Wakandans used their most valuable resource, *Vibranium* to transform their society into a thriving nation. The Wakandans drove in self-piloting aircrafts that could be remotely operated through virtual reality (VR) interfaces. They also built high-definition holographic displays and magnetic levitation train systems. In the early scenes of the film, T'Challa, the Black Panther and Okoye, his personal bodyguard arrived at Wakanda in a Royal Talon Fighter, a state-of-the-art aircraft equipped with a cloaking technology that can render it invisible to the naked eye.



Figure 4: *The Royal Talon Fighter takes flight over Wakanda.*

(Source: The Black Panther film)

In addition, citizens in Wakanda wore *kimoyo* beads, which is comparable to a hand formed bracelet. The *kimoyo* beads were advanced tactile communication tools developed with Vibranium for data transfer and data storage. The Wakandans used the *kimoyo* beads to gain access to the Wakandan database (which is similar to the internet). The *kimoyo* beads also had healing properties built into it. All that Wakandans had to do was to place these remarkable beads on the sickness or the affected area on the body and within minutes, the affected area was completely healed. In the scene where agent Ross, the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operative was cured from a near-death experience in Wakanda using *kimoyo* beads, he enunciated “...bullet wounds don't magically heal overnight.” Shuri, T'Challa's sister and head of Wakanda's Research and Technological Institute replied, “...they do in Wakanda and not with magic but with technology” pointing in reference to Wakanda's Research and Technological Institute.

The *Black Panther* (2018) film also portrayed Wakanda as an advanced military power. The Wakandan Army had a special unit called the Dora Milaje; an all-women military force dedicated to protecting the royal family. Additionally, Wakanda operated a central intelligence service called the *War Dog*, which was tasked with collecting information across the globe to ensure the safety of Wakanda. Nakia, T'Challa's lover had to relinquish her relationship with T'Challa in order to focus on her job as a member of the *War Dog*. Prince N'jobu was also a member of the *War Dog*. However, Prince N'jobu was assassinated by T'Chaka, his brother and the former King of Wakanda. In the prologue of the film, T'Chaka visits N'Jobu at his station in Oakland, California. In a confrontation that ensued between them, T'Chaka kills N'Jobu for betraying Wakanda and aiding a black-market arms dealer Ulysses Klaue in stealing Vibranium from Wakanda. The strength of

Wakanda's military was not only in its military units and structures; it was also in its weapons. Wakanda owned an array of sophisticated weaponry. From jet fighters equipped with cloaking features to sonic spears powerful enough to stop a tank.

In relation to Barry's (1995) first characteristics of postcolonial theory, which states that when analysing a cultural text through the prism of postcolonial theory, examine whether the cultural text is supporting or contesting the notion of the West being portrayed as the norm, as opposed to the non-West being portrayed as the 'other,' positioning of Wakanda as technologically far advanced than any nation in the world flips the real world on its head and allows us to explore a world in which a non-Western nation holds more power within the global culture. It also de-centres Western hegemony by placing an African nation at the centre of geopolitics thereby rebuffing the assertion that Western representations portray the West as the superpower and the non-West as inherently dependent on the West for enlightenment (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988; Macedo 2017). Nevertheless, agent Ross's disbelief about the technological achievements of Wakanda after Shuri had healed him sought to suggest that Wakanda's technological prowess was incomplete without the white colonial gaze (Qurashi, 2018).

4.1.1.2 Primordial Society

The theme of primordial society signifies an undeveloped society with its residents mostly living in rural communities (Felipe, Kumar & Abdon, 2010). Felipe et al., (2010) indicates that in primordial societies, there is very little industrial activity when compared to more developed regions and the main occupation in such societies is subsistence

agriculture. The indicators for this theme were scenes in the *Black Panther* (2018) film that portrayed Africa in the light of poverty and underdevelopment.

The data obtained also revealed that Wakanda was presented in the *Black Panther* (2018) film as an underdeveloped nation. Wakandans in the bid to hide their *Vibranium* reserves and scientific advancement from the rest of world, used their technology to create a covering field that allowed them to hide their *Vibranium* reserves and technological development in plain sight. Thus, to the outside world, Wakanda was a poor, country in Africa populated by subsistence peasant farmers in rural communities. This is exemplified in the opening scene where T'Challa and Okoye were on board in the Royal Talon Fighter. T'Challa had his chair facing a screen on which a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) news anchor was reporting on the demise of King T'Chaka, T'Challa's father. The BBC news anchor reported,

“The tiny nation of Wakanda is mourning the death of its monarch, King T'Chaka. The beloved ruler was one of the many confirmed dead after a terrorist attack at the United Nations a week ago...Though it remains one of the poorest countries in the world...Wakanda does not engage in international trade or accept aid...”

The BBC news report was accompanied by pictures of a place presumed to be Wakanda. The pictures showed patched grounds, scattered trees with women and children carrying water pots on their heads. These pictures complimented the narrative that indeed, Wakanda remains one of the poorest countries in the world.



Figure 5: *T'Challa facing the screen as the BBC anchor reported*

(Source: The Black Panther film)

Additionally, in the scene involving the interrogation of Ulysses Klaue at the CIA office after his arrest for attempting to sell Vibranium, Klaue tried to explain to the CIA agent that Wakanda was insincere about its Vibranium reserve. According to Klaue, “...it’s all a front. Explorers have searched for it...called it El Dorado. They looked for it in South America, but it was in Africa the whole time. A technological marvel...” Agent Ross, the CIA agent like everyone else, did not believe Klaue. He actually reminded Klaue that Wakanda is a Third World country.

The apparent hiding of Wakanda’s technology and wealth from the rest of world and presenting itself as an impoverished pre-industrial nation plays out the Western notion of Africa as a continent which is inherently unable to develop and maintain its own wealth as averred by Harth (2012) and emphasised by Oguh, (2015). Thus, while in one breath the

Black Panther (2018) film sought to subvert Western representation of Africa as a continent inundated with poverty and rather projecting Africa as an advanced society, in another breadth, it reinforced that very notion it sought to subvert by projecting Africa as an impoverished primordial society.

4.1.2 Hybrid Culture

The theme of hybrid culture signifies that cultural identity can be dualistic or hybrid (Bhabha, 1995; Schafer, 2011). While the concept of identity has been explored by different scholars from varied dimensions, Butler (1990) has established that identities are simultaneously individual as well as communal and they are not static but rather an ongoing and emerging process. Bhabha (1995) perceives that colonialism resulted in a mixing up of cultures of both the coloniser and that of the indigenous people who were colonised. Thus, the mixing up of cultures either through colonialism (Bhabha, 1995) or other global interactions in contemporary times (Schafer, 2011) creates a cultural identity for individuals and communities that is dualistic or hybrid in nature. The theme of hybrid culture therefore explores the multiple identities constructed in the *Black Panther* (2018) film using language, clothing, architecture and dialogues on Wakanda's foreign policy as the key indicators.

Language denotes the use of sound, signs and symbols by a specific group of people in giving expression to actions and ideas (Gogoi, 2013). The data obtained revealed that the people of Wakanda saluted each other with their arms across their chest. Once the one initiating the salute puts his or her arms across the chest, the other party to whom the salute is intended would also respond by putting his or her arms across the chest. In a call and

response manner, the Wakandans occasionally added the chant “Wakanda forever!” This was demonstrated in the scene at the Challenge Pool, when T’Challa defeated M’Baku and was crowned King of Wakanda. He gestured to the crowd with his arms across his chest and shouted “Wakanda forever!” With everyone’s arms across their chest, the whole arena erupted in a loud response, “Wakanda forever!”

Qurashi (2018) in a study on the *Black Panther* (2018) film explained the Wakandan salute. According to Qurashi (2018), the Wakandan salute was crafted by taking inspiration from the way the Pharaohs of Ancient Egypt were laid to rest with the arms across their chest. Qurashi (2018) also notes that the gesture means ‘hug’ in American Sign Language (ASL). The combination of the two; how Pharaohs of Ancient Egypt were laid to rest and the sign language for hug in ASL led to Black Panther's Wakanda forever salute.



Figure 6: *T’Challa chants Wakanda forever!*

(Source: The Black Panther film)

The film (*Black Panther*) also showed that aside the English language which appeared to be the official on-screen spoken language, the people of Wakanda also spoke in another tongue. For instance, when T'Challa visited his father on the ancestral plane, an alternate dimension that the souls of the dead travel to after their lives (have ended) on earth, T'Challa and the father chatted in the English language and from time to time switched to another tongue.

Marco (2018) in his analysis of the *Black Panther* film revealed that the other tongue T'Challa and the father conversed in at the ancestral plane was isiXhosa. IsiXhosa is a South African language which is very much associated with the South African freedom fighters in the anti-apartheid days (Marco, 2018).

In reference to Barry's (1995) second characteristics of postcolonial analysis which consider how language might be used in supporting or contesting colonial legacy, it is evident that language was used to convey Africa's history of resistance to colonialism as indicated by Marco (2018). A scrutiny of Quurashi's (2018) explanation of the Wakanda forever salute also points to the conclusion that the *Black Panther* (2018) film utilised elements of African history and incorporated them into Western traditions of using sound and signs in giving meanings to actions and ideas in Wakanda (Marco, 2018). Thus, language was used as a tool to support and, some occasions, to contest the legacy of colonialism in Africa.

On clothing as an indicator for the theme of hybrid culture, the data showed that Wakanda was inhabited by five native tribes. They were the River tribe, Mining tribe, Border tribe, Merchant tribe and Jabaris or Mountain tribe. Each tribe had their own distinctive clothing. The River tribe mostly wore green clothes with the males having a

disc inserted in a hole pierced in the ears and the enlarged bottom lips. The Mining tribe also wore colours such as red and orange. The Boarder tribe covered themselves blanket cloaks while the Merchant tribe's traditional colour was purple. The Jabarisi on the other hand, wore leather sheath underneath a black skirt covered with dried glass. However, there were scenes in the *Black Panther* (2018) film; the leader of the River tribe for example, was wearing a suit and tie.



Figure 7: Elder of the River tribe in Wakanda

(Source: The Black Panther film)

Analysis also show that the lip plate worn by the men of the River tribe was comparable to that of the Mursi tribe of Ethiopia (Marco, 2018).

The data also showed that Wakanda was a highly urbanised society with lots of high rising buildings. The Wakandan Palace for example, was a grand edifice with the floor

made of materials such as clay and glass. Hannah Beachler who worked as production designer for the *Black Panther* (2018) film in an interview revealed that the structural design of the Wakandan Palace was borrowed from that of the Buckingham Palace, home to the Queen of England and the former seat of Britain's colonial power (Qurashi, 2018).



*Figure 8: The floor of the Wakandan Palace
(The Black Panther film)*

Additionally, the theme of hybrid culture was also central to the conversations surrounding Wakanda's foreign policy. T'Challa, initially supported the continuation of Wakanda hiding its technology and wealth from the rest of the world and using it to cater for its own citizens whereas Killmonger (T'Challa's cousin and antagonist in the film) argued that Wakanda had a moral obligation to equip oppressed people of African descent around the world with *Vibranium* to help them liberate themselves from oppression. Killmonger and subsequently, T'Challa therefore exhibited elements of a pan-African

worldview. Pan-Africanism generally refers to the notion that there should exist a global solidarity among all people of African descent whether still living on the continent or part of the diaspora (Adi & Sherwood, 2003). Implicit in this worldview is the notion that identity can be hybrid or dualistic, that one can be living outside the African continent and still retain an element of that African identity.

Barry's (1995) third characteristics of postcolonial theory emphasises the effects of mixed or hybrid identity on the cultural orientation of the individual and the community at large. The *Black Panther* (2018) film thus, constructed the identities of the people of Wakanda and the Wakandan nation as a whole by fusing some cultural elements from Africa and some cultural elements from Western societies. This dual identity was evident in the language, clothing and architectural designs of Wakanda (Marco, 2018; Qurashi, 2018). This reinforces the assertion by Langmia (2018) that the effect of colonialism has led to Africans becoming cultural mulattoes – a poor copy of themselves and a poor copy of the coloniser. In terms of Wakanda's foreign policy, the conversation between Killmonger and T'Challa reinforced the idea that the *Black Panther* (2018) film depicted the identities of Africans as a hybrid where one can be living outside the African continent and still retain an element of that African identity (Adi & Sherwood, 2003).

4.1.3 Appropriated Culture

The theme of appropriated culture denotes adopting elements of a certain culture into a commercial text of another culture (Sachs, 2009). According to Turner (1996), films appropriate other cultures in order to profit from other people's experiences. The indicators

to this particular theme are the agencies benefiting from the production and sale of the *Black Panther* (2018) film.

The *Black Panther* (2018) film was produced and distributed across the globe by Marvel Studios and Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures respectively; the both are all American firms. However, the film is centered on a Black superhero, with a cast list of mostly Black people. The film was also directed by an African-American, Ryan Coogler, who co-wrote the screenplay with Joe Robert Cole, also an African-American film director. Strong and Chaplin (2019) argue that even though Coogler and Cole are African-Americans, they bring some African perspectives to bear on the production of the *Black Panther* (2018) film. The production of the film also included some home-grown Africans like Lupita Nyong'o (Nakia), who is born to a Kenyan father and John Kani (T'Chaka), the South African actor (Strong & Chaplin, 2019). The inclusion of Africans in the creative process of the *Black Panther* (2018) film obliterates the traditional notion that Western cinema draws upon cultural fragments from Black communities to solely line their pockets (Strong & Chaplin, 2019). More so, the addition of Africans in such Hollywood blockbusters does not only improve Black representations, it also makes Africans beneficiaries of the commercial advantages such films may bring (Qurashi, 2018; Strong & Chaplin, 2019).



Figure 9: The Black Panther poster

(Source: <https://www.marvel.com/movies/black-panther>)

Chutel (2018) is of the view that when appropriating cultural settings into Hollywood films, shooting the scenes of those cultural settings in the actual cultural context adds to the authenticity of the scenes. Nevertheless, the *Black Panther* (2018) film was mostly shot in a studio in Atlanta, Georgia. The waterfalls in Wakanda are actually shots of Iguazu Falls in Argentina, while all the high-rising buildings portrayed in Wakanda were developed with computer graphics technology (Subrick, 2018). Thus, inasmuch as the *Black Panther* (2018) film sought to portray Africa, the filmmakers used non-African settings to depict Africa. This idea corroborates the argument by Turner (1996) that Western filmic texts appropriate other cultures by using Western settings to portray cultural settings of other cultures.

Relative to Barry's (1995) fourth characteristics of postcolonial theory which highlights a possible subversion of colonial power dynamics in cross-cultural collaborations between non-Western piece of culture and Western cultural texts. According

to Barry (1995), when a non-Western piece of culture is appropriated into a Western cultural text, there is the need to consider who has agency or control over the creative process and by extension, who is financially benefitting from that cross-cultural collaborations. As far as the creative process is concerned, even though the *Black Panther* (2018) franchise is owned by American companies, the film was also used as a platform for some brilliant actors, actresses, film producers and script writers from the African continent and the diaspora. With a cast of over 90 percent made up of Black people, the *Black Panther* (2018) film is said to be Hollywood's biggest black representation in modern history (Strong & Chaplin, 2019). This goes to ensure that while the film did not take some cultural components from Africa to line the pockets of only Westerners, it neither subverted the power dynamics in post-colonial texts. This is because the agency that benefitted more from this cross-cultural collaboration was the West (Barry, 1995; Chutel, 2018; Subrick, 2018).

4.2 RQ2. How does the *Black Panther* (2018) film address stereotypes in Western media representations of Africa?

Stereotypes are the belief that all people within the same racial, ethnic or cultural group will act alike and share the same beliefs and attitudes (Blum, 2004). Thus, stereotypes are false or misleading generalisations about groups held in a manner that renders them largely, though not entirely, immune to counterevidence (Blum, 2004). A number of studies have established that since the period of slavery and colonialism, Western media have portrayed Africa in a stereotypical manner (Harth, 2012; Michira, 2002; Oguh, 2015). Oguh (2015) observes that activities of the Western film industry have

contributed to the persistent stereotypical representations of Africa due to their visual advantage which easily enables the retention of attention among audiences. Harth (2012) mentions that Western media stereotypes of Africa can be best described as myths and many of such myths associate Africa with famine, war, diseases, poverty and political corruption.

Since the release of the *Black Panther (2018)* film, it has attracted a lot of reviews and reactions all over social media and traditional media alike (Strong & Chaplin, 2019). Many of such reviews have argued that the film thrives on rebutting negative Western media depictions of Africa (Strong & Chaplin, 2019). It is against this backdrop that this research question sought to investigate and analyse how the *Black Panther (2018)* film addressed Western media stereotypes on Africa.

In responding to the question, four themes came up. These were *science and technology, economic independence, gender equity and cultural homogenisation*. Using the stereotype theory and key concepts on stereotypes discussed in chapter two, these themes are critically examined to explain how Western media stereotypes on Africa were addressed in the *Black Panther (2018)* film.

4.2.1 Science and Technology

The theme of science and technology pertain to the application of knowledge in the design, production and utilisation of goods and services mostly for the benefit of human activities (Wahab, Rose & Osman, 2012). This theme underscores the reliance and application of scientific knowledge in Wakanda. It also focusses on the advantages of science and technology to the everyday life of the people of Wakanda.

The data obtained from the *Black Panther (2018)* film show that in the prologue of the film, a father is heard explaining to his son how a meteorite hit the earth, depositing *Vibranium* in what would go on to become the nation of Wakanda. The people living there mined the *Vibranium* and its special properties gave them a technological advantage over every other nation in the world. This preliminary scene in the film explains how Wakandans got hold of *Vibranium*. Related information from the data obtained from the *Black Panther (2018)* film revealed that Wakanda operated a Research and Technological Institute which was headed by Shuri, the princess of Wakanda. The Research and Technological Institute served as the heart of research and scientific innovation in Wakanda. It was from this institute that Wakandans mined the technological advantages from *Vibranium* and used it to develop sophisticated virtual reality (VR) interfaces, aircrafts, high-definition holographic displays and magnetic levitation train systems.

Wakanda's technological prowess was demonstrated in the scene when T'Challa was on a mission in Busan, South Korea to apprehend Ulysses Klaue for stealing *Vibranium*. Right from Wakanda's Research and Technological Institute, Shuri remotely drove a car in the streets of Busan through a hologram in order to help T'Challa apprehend Klaue. Although Klaue managed to destroy the car, shutting down the institute's hologram, Shuri successfully assisted her brother to apprehend Klaue.

The film depicted science and technology as the core component of the everyday life of the Wakandan people. Even their clothes were made of *Vibranium*. For example, the Border tribe's blanket capes were made out of *Vibranium* with shielding and masking features. This was evident in the scene where the Border tribe soldiers used their blanket capes to create a masking shield barrier in the attempt to stop T'Challa from thwarting

Killmonger's mission. The film's (Black Panther) projection of Wakandan – an imaginary African State – as a nation driven by science and technology also somehow runs contrary to the assertions made by Harth (2012) and Michira (2002) which stipulate that Western media stereotype Africans by portraying them as primitive and technologically bankrupt.



Figure 10: Shuri drives a car through a hologram

(Source: The Black Panther film)

4.2.2 Economic Independence

Economic independence was an important theme in how the *Black Panther* (2018) film addressed Western stereotypes of Africa. This theme highlights a situation in which a country does not rely on another country for its survival but manages its resources in a manner that makes it self-sufficient (Bettio & Tacci, 2017; Huber, Stephens, Bradley & Moller, 2009). The key indicator for this particular theme was Wakanda's trade and economic policy.

The data from the *Black Panther* (2018) film showed that Wakanda neither engaged in any form of trade with any country nor relied on aid or any external support. They solely relied on goods and services produced in Wakanda and by Wakandans. Thus, when Killmonger suggested that Wakanda's *Vibranium* and technology should be exported to free the millions of black communities outside Wakanda, T'Challa's response summed up Wakanda's no external trade policy. He remarked, "...that is not our way."

The Wakandans also did not seem to care about the accumulation of wealth. The data revealed that they had marketplaces and food stalls, but no-one seemed to exchange currency. Wakandans neither operated a bank nor any financial institution that accepted deposits from the public to create credit. It is only reasonable to assume there's no Wakandan currency; however, one of the main tribes, the Merchant tribe, regulated activities pertaining to trade. Presumably therefore, they were the ones who ran the shops and the big marketplaces in Wakanda.

Even though Wakanda sat on a valuable natural resource – *Vibranium* – Strong and Chaplin (2019) argues that Wakanda's most valuable resource was its human resource. It was the human resource that refined *Vibranium* and used it to transform the Wakandan economy into an economically independent nation (Strong & Chaplin, 2019). The State's approach to managing and utilising *Vibranium* created a considerable and huge shared benefit to the entire Wakandan society (Strong & Chaplin, 2019).

Wakanda's autarchic economic policies which manifested in its shared wealth, exceedingly high levels of social and human development and cutting-edge technological innovation (Saadia, 2018) challenges the notion that Western media representations portray Africa as economically reliant on foreign aid and donor benevolence (Oguh, 2015). Again,

depicting Africa as an economic powerhouse, the *Black Panther* (2018) film demolishes the notion that Western media, in many cases, uses their positions of power through foreign aid to project Africans as poor and helpless (Harth, 2012).



Figure 11: A cross-section of Wakanda's market
(Source: *The Black Panther* film)

4.2.3 Gender Equality

The theme of gender equality outlines the notion of equal access to resources and opportunities including economic participation and decision-making regardless of gender or sex (Traversa, 2012; Woodhead, 2007). The theme of gender equality therefore emphasises the balance of power between the men and women of Wakanda.

The facts obtained from the *Black Panther* (2018) film showed that in Wakanda women were active players in the economic fortunes and decision-making just as much as the men. For example, even though both men and women served in the military of Wakanda, the Dola Milaje which was an all-women special force unit were given the task

to protect the royal family. In addition, two women who were also the leaders of the Mining tribe and the Merchant tribe respectively served as members of the Tribal Council, the highest decision-making assembly of the State. The queen mother of Wakanda, Queen Ramonda was also a member of the Tribal Council.



Figure 12: Dola Milaje welcomes T'Challa

(Source: *The Black Panther* film)

The theme of gender equality was also evident in how characters like Nakia and Shuri, both independent career women stood side-by-side with the men of Wakanda. Shuri, managed Wakanda's Research and Technological Institute while Nakia served in Wakanda's central intelligence service also known as the *War Dog*.

Strong and Chaplin (2019) notes that one key value from the *Black Panther* (2018) film was the balance of power between the two genders in Wakanda. In Wakanda, women could assume their own authority but similarly could also stand with and support the men (Strong & Chaplin, 2019). This was demonstrated by the character of Black Panther, who

was all-powerful, and yet had Okoye by his side. The portrayal of women as strong, independent and leaders in the *Black Panther (2018)* film conflicts seems to run parallel with the notion that Western media portrays African women as second fiddles to their male counterparts (Oguh, 2015). It also challenges Western media gender stereotypes that construct African women as trouble makers and victims of abuse and repression (Macedo, 2017).

That notwithstanding, the *Black Panther (2018)* film also reinforced the notion of patriarchy in African societies (Madau, 2016; Zelega, 2018). This was established in the scenes where Queen Ramonda, Shuri and Nakia were fleeing from the wrath of Killmonger after he had succeeded in overthrowing T'Challa. Nakia managed to get a piece of the heart-shaped herb, the source of the Black Panther's strength before Killmonger could destroy all of it. Yet, neither of the three women could ingest this power plant, because only men could assume the powers of the Black Panther. They (the women) therefore agreed to give the herb to M'Baku, only to discover in M'Baku's habitat that T'Challa was not dead after all. The inability of the three women to ingest the heart-shaped herb goes to reinforce the notion that in Africa men hold ultimate power and women are largely excluded from it (Madau, 2016; Zelega, 2018).

4.2.4 Cultural Homogenisation

The theme of cultural homogenisation accentuates the idea of some or all cultural identities becoming or being made same (Conversi, 2017). Cultural homogenisation is generally regarded as an unfavourable process as it does not allow for the scope of distinct identities to be differentiated from each other (Vidya-Mitra, 2017). This theme, thus,

focuses on the reduction of cultural diversity in Africa into a single culture (Barker, 2008; Jennings, 2010).

A critical review of the *Black Panther (2018)* film, appears to suggest that it sought to portray Africa as Wakanda. No other African country was mentioned or shown in the *Black Panther (2018)* film except Wakanda. Even when the Wakandans decided to end their isolationist policy and use their resources to empower other Black people, the only Black community the *Black Panther (2018)* film portrayed outside of Wakanda was in *Oakland* in California, thus, reducing the cultural diversity of Africa into a single entity, which also amounts to homogenising Africa (Harth, 2012; Oguh, 2015). This goes to reinforces the notion that Western media portray the continent of Africa as a country (Michira, 2002).

In accordance with the stereotype theory, Western media stereotypes of Africa render Africa largely, though not entirely, immune to counter evidence. However, since stereotypes are not immutable and are subject to change in the face of persistent disconfirming information (Bordalo et al., 2015; Schneider, 2004), the *Black Panther (2018)* film provides counter information on traditionally held Western stereotypical perceptions such as Africans are poor and helpless (Harth, 2012; Oguh, 2015) and to some extent, projects Africans as economically independent. Representation in films can alter reality (Clarke, 2008), and modify stereotypical perceptions as well (Bordalo et al., 2015; Schneider, 2004).

4.3 RQ.3 What are the dominant ideologies embedded in the *Black Panther* (2018) film?

Ideology is a system of philosophies or viewpoints that reflects the social needs and aspirations of an individual, a group, or a culture (Pearson & Simpson, 2001). Mass media are often considered as principal sites where ideological warfare is waged (Hall, 2013). Films, as with all media products, reflect certain values and offer ways of seeing the world (Croteau & Hoynes, 2018; Hayward, 2000). According to Combs and Combs (2013), a film is a sum total of the maker's attitudes, beliefs, political, social and cultural positions. These positions could be visible or deeply embedded in the film in a way that seems natural. More often, filmmakers identify a position about a certain social reality. This position becomes the ideology of the film (Combs & Combs, 2013).

Some scholars argue that films promote the worldview of the powerful in society so that their imposed worldview becomes the universally valid dominant ideology (Hunter, 1991; Tagudina, 2012). The dominant ideologies are used by the powerful in society to control public opinion and engineer consent (Tagudina, 2012). Hence, to uncover the dominant ideology in filmic texts, Croteau and Hoynes (2018) recommend that the researcher must interrogate the underlying images of society embedded in that filmic text. In light of this, this research question (RQ3) sought to identify and analyse the dominant ideologies embedded in the *Black Panther* (2018) film.

From the assessment of the data retrieved, it was revealed that the following dominant ideologies were embedded in the *Black Panther* (2018) film; *Afrofuturism, neo-liberalism and pan-Africanism*.

4.3.1 Afrofuturism

The theme of Afrofuturism is the re-imagining of a future filled with arts, science and technology seen through a Black lens (Strong & Chaplin, 2019). The term Afrofuturism was conceived a quarter-century ago by a white author Mark Dery in his essay “*Black to the Future*,” which looks at fictional texts within the African diaspora (Strong & Chaplin, 2019; Yaszek, 2006). What makes Afrofuturism significantly different from standard science fiction is that it is steeped in African mythology, Black identity, feminism and science (Strong & Chaplin, 2019). The key pointers for this theme emphasises on the use of science and technology, mythology and feminism in Wakanda.

The data gathered from the *Black Panther* (2018) film indicated that Wakanda was a prosperous African nation that had never been colonised, and boasts of one of the world’s richest resources, *Vibranium*. Since white supremacy never intruded on Wakandan culture and its people, the *Black Panther* (2018) film sought to portray the Wakandan culture as immersed in African traditions and Black identity. In addition, the film featured a predominantly Black cast and a Black producer in spearheading the shaping of this story. In spite of Wakanda’s Black identity, it was also portrayed as a technological hub. Princess Shuri is not only shown as the smartest person in Wakanda, but also responsible for the creation and maintenance of all the sophisticated artillery, transportation networks and tactile communication tools in Wakanda. As evidenced in the scene where after his coronation as King of Wakanda, T’Challa visited Shuri at Wakanda’s Research and Technological Institute. Shuri introduced T’Challa to a new Black Panther suit equipped with biosensors that can monitor bodily functions, such as heart rate, and send the information wirelessly to the computers in the research institute. The suit could also

enhance the strength and agility of the Black Panther by absorbing and releasing massive quantities of kinetic energy as shockwaves.



Figure 13 A section of Wakanda's Research and Technological Institute

(Source: *The Black Panther* film)

The *Black Panther* (2018) film also infused science and technology into mythology. Wakanda's technological advancement was made possible by a mountain of Vibranium which is believed to have travelled through space and collided with Africa thousands of years ago. The cataclysm altered Wakanda's environment and created a fusion of plant life that was both Earth and alien.

According to Yaszek (2006), Afrofuturism incorporates science fiction into an African narrative of culture and mythology. Hence, the story of an 'alien' *Vibranium* being the source of Wakanda's technological marvel adds to the Afrofuturistic perspective of the *Black Panther* (2018) film.

Additionally, Strong and Chaplin (2019) note that Afrofuturism projects a blend of time and space, merging both ancestral history and the future with the mystical world. This

is evident in the *Black Panther* (2018) film when T'Challa visits his dead father on the ancestral plane. The depiction of bond of kinship between T'Challa and the father emphasises the knowledge of one's past. This resonates with Black people who are disconnected from family lineages due to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, and yet have re-made kinship patterns within the institution of slavery (Strong & Chaplin, 2019).

The *Black Panther* (2018) film was also imbued with black feminism where Black women were not victims of sexual abuse or disadvantaged (Crenshaw, 1991) but portrayed as leaders, strong and intelligent. The film weaves a picture of powerful women who are free-thinking and unique (Strong & Chaplin, 2019). From Nikita, who served in Wakanda's central intelligence service also known as the *War Dog*, to General Okoye, head of the Dola Milage and considered the most powerful warrior in Wakanada, and to Shuri, arguably the smartest person in Wakanda. These powerful images reject many of the negative tropes of Black femininity (Strong & Chaplin, 2019). Ultimately, the *Black Panther* (2018) film's re-imagined African world driven by cutting-edge scientific innovations, African mythology and feminism fuels its Afrofuturistic purview.

4.3.2 Neo-liberalism

The theme of neo-liberalism highlights the concept of open borders and free trade (Bloom, 2017). The concept of open borders and free trade is generally associated with economic policies that cuts or removes trade tariffs and barriers (Bloom, 2017). The effects of open borders and free trade has liberalised the international movement of capital, broken up state-owned enterprises, sold off public assets and the dominance of an international market (Birch, 2010).

The theme of neo-liberalism is evident in the *Black Panther* (2018) film as the data obtained indicates that Wakanda, initially did not believe in open borders and free trade, thus concealed its valued asset, *Vibranium* from the rest of the world. Wakanda's no open border and free trade policy was seeded in a lie that tricked the whole world into believing that Wakanda was a poor country so that it does not inadvertently invite outsiders who will steal their *Vibranium* and misuse it for nefarious purposes. Nevertheless, Wakanda's no open border and free trade policy was set to change with the arrival of Killmonger in Wakanda. Killmonger's character was hinged on Black kid who grew up without his father in a country that treats African-Americans poorly. The abject poverty and systematic oppression that Killmonger was subject to whilst growing up is one that informs his outlook as an adult. His desire was to export Wakandan technology to help liberate oppressed African people all over the world. What lacks conviction in Killmonger's end goal was his attempt to destroy the heart-shaped herb – a plant native to Wakanda that was traditionally consumed by the new ruler and the heir to the mantle of the Black Panther. This portrayed Killmonger's mission as driven solely by rage as opposed to a quest for justice. However, the 'revolution' once promised by Killmonger was finally thwarted by T'Challa and his allies. In the end, T'Challa adopts some lessons from Killmonger and changes Wakanda's no open border and free trade policy. Wakandans thus, decide to open their borders and export their technology to help liberate oppressed African people all over the world. They started by first setting up a community project in *Oakland*, California where Killmonger grew up, to support local kids of African descent. The community project in *Oakland*, California was to ensure the international movement of capital from Wakanda to the United States and subsequently, to the rest of the world.

Birch (2010) asserts that the tenets of neo-liberalism are vital to the survival of capitalism and the American society. This can be seen in the role of the CIA agent, Everett Ross in the *Black Panther* (2018) film. Agent Ross was a key member of the group of allies who helped T'Challa to stop Killmonger. Also, when Wakandans finally agreed to export their technology, the United States was their first stop. Wakanda's first offshore project was in *Oakland*, California as already stated above. This goes to reinforce the assertion that Hollywood films are capitalist in ethos (Ibbi, 2014; Qurashi, 2018).



Figure 14: Wakanda's Royal Talon Fighter arrives in Oakland, California
(Source: *The Black Panther* film)

4.3.3 Pan-Africanism

The theme of pan-Africanism highlights the belief that there should exist a global solidarity between all people of African descent whether still living on the continent or part of the diaspora (Adi & Sherwood, 2003). At its core, Pan-Africanism is a belief that all people of African descent, both on the continent and in the diaspora, share not merely a

common history, but a common destiny (Adi & Sherwood, 2003; Minkah, 2011). The key pointer for this theme focusses on the conflict between T'Challa and Killmonger.

The conflict between T'Challa and Killmonger represents the core conflict of the *Black Panther* (2018) film. It was a conflict that broadly hinged on change. The way these two characters were introduced in the film set the tone for what will eventually decide the fate of Wakanda. T'Challa is first spotted in the Wakandan Royal Talon Fighter at the opening scenes of the film with his back facing the camera as he pushed in his chair to watch the news about his father's death. With his back also facing the camera, Killmonger was also introduced in a relatively similar way, as he inspected a collection of African artifacts at the British Museum in London. The connection between these two scenes is evident in the way these two characters perceived Wakanda. Whereas, T'Challa believed in preserving the Wakandan tradition which has been bequeathed to him by his father and other past leaders of Wakanda. T'Challa sought to continue Wakanda's isolationist policy that concealed Wakanda's technology and heavy reserve of Vibranium from the prey of the world. T'Challa on the other hand, believed that Wakanda had a moral obligation to equip oppressed people of African descent around the world with Vibranium to assist them liberate themselves from oppression. The contrast between these two characters continues to the final battle where Killmonger eventually was killed. Killmonger's final words summed up the theme of pan-Africanism in *Black Panther* (2018). He said “...*Bury me in the ocean, with my ancestors that jumped from the ships, because they knew death was better than bondage.*”

The death of Killmonger changed perspectives in Wakanda. T'Challa acknowledged that Wakandans had to solidarise with all people of African descent across

the globe. This worldview eventually led to Wakandans setting up their first offshore community project in a Black community in Oakland, California where Killmonger grew up. According to Subrick (2018), the *Black Panther* (2018) film represents the type of unity that makes Africa less foreign to Black – Americans and other people of African descent. In relation to the theory of hegemony, the *Black Panther* (2018) film seeks to engineer consent by borrowing cultural representations of Black identity into visual images that offer peculiar ways of seeing the world (Croteau & Hoynes, 2018; Hayward, 2000). In using cultural representations of Black identity, the film subtly exerts influence on its audience, especially audiences of African descent and legitimises Western ideals in a way that seem natural and practically unnoticed (Boothman, 2008). The *Black Panther* (2018) film also affirms the assertion that the powerful in society often employ institutions such as schools, religion and media products like films to help promulgate their worldviews as the universal way of thinking (Croteau & Hoynes, 2018).

4.4 Summary

This chapter discussed the findings and analysis of the research questions for the study. The data collected on the three research questions were critically described, explained and analysed using the theories of postcolonialism, stereotype and hegemony. The first research question (RQ1) which sought to examine how the *Black Panther* (2018) film depicted Africa revealed five main themes: advanced society, primordial society, hybrid identity and cultural appropriation. A total of seven themes were discussed and analysed for research questions two (RQ2) and three (RQ3). Research question two (RQ2) had four themes. They were science and technology, economic independence, gender

equity and cultural homogenisation. Research question three (RQ3) on the other hand had three themes: Afrofuturism, neo-liberalism and pan-Africanism.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarises the study. It draws conclusions from the key finding and makes recommendations on countering Eurocentric representations of Africa and Western cultural hegemony. Additionally, limitations of the study as well as areas for further research are outlined in this chapter.

5.1 Summary

This study set out to examine how the *Black Panther (2018)* film depicted Africa. It also probed into how the film was used to address stereotypes on Africa in Western media and outlined the dominant ideologies embedded in the film. The importance of the study was also delineated.

Likewise, the extensive review of literature served as a foundation for exploring the following concepts: film; Africa and film; stereotypes in Western media representations of Africa; and, ideology and film. The theories that were used to explicate the data – postcolonial theory, stereotype theory and theory of hegemony – were also reviewed and situated in filmic context.

The research approach and design for this study were qualitative (Creswell, 2014) and qualitative content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005) respectively. These afforded me the opportunity to explore the embedded meanings of the filmic text. The *Black Panther (2018)* film was selected using the purposive sampling technique (Daymon & Holloway,

2001). The method of data collection was document analysis where I watched the *Black Panther (2018)* film scene by scene in order gain understanding to answer my research questions. Finally, to minimally organise and describe my data in rich detail, I thematically analysed the data (Braun & Clark, 2006).

5.2 Main Findings and Conclusions

Upon analysing the data, the key findings that were discovered led to several conclusions. The first research question which sought to examine how the *Black Panther (2018)* film depicted Africa revealed that the *Black Panther (2018)* film used the following themes to depict Africa: *contradictory terms, hybrid culture and appropriated culture*. Drawing from the theory of postcolonialism, it was established that while the *Black Panther (2018)* film depicted Africa in the manner that subverted colonial legacies, it also reinforced those colonial legacies through other depictions.

The second research probed into how the *Black Panther (2018)* film addressed Western media stereotypes of Africa and in responding to the question, four themes came up. These were *science and technology, economic independence, gender equity and cultural homogenisation*. The findings of this research question revealed that although the *Black Panther (2018)* film largely challenged Western media stereotypes of Africa it also reinforced the stereotype of cultural homogeneity where Western media see the Africa as a country and not a continent (Michira, 2002). In accordance with the stereotype theory, Blum (2004) explains that Western media stereotypes render Africa largely, though not entirely, immune to counter evidence. In doing so, the stereotypes shape Western media perception of Africa in seeing the stereotypic characteristics when they are not present,

failing to see the contrary of those characteristics when they are, and generally homogenising the Africa.

The findings of the third research question also revealed the themes of *Afrofuturism*, *neo-liberalism* and *pan-Africanism* as dominant ideologies in the *Black Panther* (2018) film. In view of the theory of hegemony, it was concluded the *Black Panther* (2018) film sought to engineer consent by offering peculiar ways of seeing the world (Croteau & Hoynes, 2018). It also confirmed the assertion that the powerful in society often employ institutions such as schools, religion and media which includes films to promulgate their worldviews as the universal way of thinking (Croteau & Hoynes, 2018).

5.3 Limitations

The study set out to interrogate the *Black Panther* (2018) film on how it depicted Africa, addressed stereotypes and conveyed dominant ideologies embedded in the film. To carry out this study, I encountered some limitations.

First, gaining access to the authorised copy of the *Black Panther* (2018) film was not a straightforward procedure. I had to purchase the film from Apple's iTunes Store for \$19.99 and then proceed to download it unto my laptop. Suffice it to say that, it was a 2.18 gigabyte sized file.

Secondly, language was also a challenge. Despite the fact that the film was mostly in the English language, there were also scenes that the characters spoke in isiXhosa. In order to understand what the characters sought to say in isiXhosa, I had to refer to the subtitles as well as other documented materials on the film like the study conducted by Marco (2018).

The manner in which some characters pronounced certain English words was equally a challenge. The *Black Panther* (2018) film depicted an African country that had never been colonised. Thus, the natives of that country spoke with an accent that made it challenging in understanding the messages in some of the dialogues. I had to play those dialogues over and over again in order to appreciate the messages.

Nevertheless, these limitations did not take away the credibility of the study, as it has implications for further studies.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

For further studies, a follow up work can be carried out taking into consideration two films that focuses on Africa. One produced in Hollywood and another produced in Africa in order to draw out the commonalties and differences in the way the films depict Africa.

Future researchers can also look at audience perception on the *Black Panther* (2018) film using the audience perception theory. A similar study can also be done by analysing post the *Black Panther* (2018) film reactions and comments on social media using the reader response theory or Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the discussions and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made.

As demonstrated in this study, films can be used to reinforce stereotypes and colonial legacies as well as subvert them. Nevertheless, to shift from a viewpoint of the

world that is Eurocentric to a point of view that is polycentric and multicultural, it is imperative to challenge filmic mediations that perpetuate stereotypes and Western cultural hegemony. I therefore recommend that both African and Hollywood filmmakers create images that reflect the multicultural diversity in Africa and the world at large.

African filmmakers must lead the way in helping audiences around the globe to understand Africa better and to build confidence in their capacity as filmmakers to develop new possibilities through the production of visual images on Africa. Although African filmmakers do not inherently possess a superior vision of Africa, their perspectives on Africa are invaluable. As such, I recommend that the African cinema finds a way to co-exist with the dominant cinemas of the West at the global front.

Lastly, one cannot deny the might and power of Hollywood and its influence on how people around the globe perceive the world. While historically this dominant industry has marginalised and homogenised Africa and Africans, it is also possible that Hollywood can produce images that contradict what has been created in the past. To improve representations of Africa in Hollywood films, I further recommend that there is the need to use film producers with higher level of knowledge on Africa and its multiplicities of cultures.

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