THE PARADOX OF NOLLYWOOD:

The Structural Intricacies and Cultural Significance of the World's Fastest-Growing Film Industry

by

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Thesis
Submitted to Flinders University
for the degree of

Masters by Research

College of Education, Humanities, and Law
16/08/2018

Masters by research declaration

I, Felix Ohireime Odion, declare that the Masters by Research thesis entitled *The Paradox of Nollywood* is no more than 70, 000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Signature…… Date…26/09/2017……..

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the Nigerian Film industry, known as Nollywood, with particular emphasis on the often ignored marketing and distribution structure of this low cost and high volume digital film production industry. This model has been described by film scholars as the new model for film-making in Africa. Few industry observers were optimistic about its future when it commenced with the VHS camera format in 1992. My extrapolation is that Nollywood defied the pessimistic predictions and has become globally relevant due to a new model it developed towards filmography in a way that resonates with Africans using the medium of low-cost, and sometimes feudal, digital technology. It is this determination to use the most affordable means of story-telling that has led to a prolific industry that now accounts for over 50% of films made in Africa. Film scholars, including Ramon Lobato, now refer to it as the fastest growing film industry in the world.

There is an increasing body of creative work with high budgets in Nollywood, all with the aim of achieving global recognition. However, the ailing and now downward spiralling Nigerian economy, as is the case with most African countries, highlights the risk involved in high budget films. I argue in this thesis that the low-budget and high volume production model played a major part in the growth of the industry and a departure from this strategic archetype could be counter-productive. In arriving at my conclusion, I have incorporated interviews with over a dozen Nollywood practitioners. I highlight the symbiotic relationship between film genres and audience reception in Nigeria as well as their correlation to marketing and distribution. My research imperative is to outline the benefits of the distinctive features of the Nollywood model to global creative industries.

1. INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

In West Africa, storytelling predates western colonization and arches back to the beginning of the subregion. Although West Africans, like most African people, are predominantly oral peoples with art forms that are mostly oral, rather than literary (Agatucci 2010). This trend has since changed, as the use of motion pictures in storytelling has assumed a strong weight in West Africa and Nigeria in particular, but not without criticisms of the seemingly unprofessional approach to conveying stories through the medium. These criticisms have come from practitioners and observers of Nollywood within and outside of the West African subregion. For example, according to Rice (2012) of the *New York Times*: "most of the movies themselves are awful, marred by slapdash production, melodramatic acting, and ludicrous plots". Yet, their popularity seems to suggest that the audience connects with them. Similarly, despite the long and rich history of storytelling in Africa, the Nollywood brand has been described as the first truly African-initiated dialogue with the rest of the world, with Africans as the moderators (Proudly African, 2013).

Nollywood production is multi-language and aimed at mass-market consumption rather than at more marginal art cinema releasing. This means that there are constant criticisms of Nollywood films, with some observers describing them as being shallow or imitative of western stories. Some critics have seized on what they identify as the soap opera forms evident in them (Haynes 2000, p. 3, 22). However, the study of soap operas is now well established in media studies with many scholars (including Carol T. Williams, Herta Herzog, and Dannielle Blumenthal) producing details studies of the form. Blumenthal (1997, Pg. 3, 91) recounts how soap opera was a positive part of her family life from childhood to adulthood and remarks that the devaluation of soap opera as 'non aesthetic' is an outcome of the dominance of pro-masculine discourse.

Nevertheless, the popular basis of Nollywood film-making does not bother Nollywood audiences who find it easy to connect with the stories that the films tell. Just how Nollywood narratives engage the everyday life of Nigerian audiences will be a subject to which I will return in this thesis. Having been actively involved in Nollywood

for over twenty years, I can easily attest to the fact that, despite their basis in popular storytelling and views relating to the digressional mode of storytelling such as the African oral mode which I mentioned in the first paragraph of this thesis and which was popular with the old Nollywood, there are many original scripted narratives, particularly in contemporary Nollywood, that are rich in content, well plotted, and incorporate Aristotle's unities of dramatic structure (time, place, and action) and other elements of well written scripts. More importantly, the growth of the industry against the tide of problems and inhibitions it has been exposed to since its inception is remarkable and will be central to the questions that this thesis will address.

This project addresses key questions that continue to interest many Nollywood observers and commentators, as well as those with an interest in national cinemas based on a combination of popular production and low capital:

- Why did the industry thrive despite paltry film budgets?
- How come the second highest volume of film productions in the world is made by an industry that is resident in an intractably unhealthy incubation environment?
- What are the key sustaining factors of Nollywood's success that may be lacking (and necessary) in other film industries of developing nations?
- How did audiences connect with the narrative and stylistic forms in the stories, and how might they be relevant to a wider regional film market?
- How sustainable is the regional and global attention that Nollywood has captured?
- What is the impact of film genre on the marketing and distribution model of Nollywood and its industrial structure and what can the world learn from this model?

Of these questions, the central one is: how do we account for the success of the Nigerian film industry, given its enormous deficiencies?

NOLLYWOOD SOBRIQUET FOR THE NIGERIAN FILM INDUSTRY

According to local usage, Nollywood is the nomenclature for the entire Nigerian film production industry (the biggest film industry in Africa) without exception. A lot of eyebrows were raised in the first quarter of 2000s when the term Nollywood first came into use. One of such dissenting voices was Eddie Ugbomah, a veteran Nigerian film-

maker who expressed his disdain for the appellation at various fora, describing it as "Thrash" on the basis that Nolly means "Nothing" (Modern Ghana 2007). But the overwhelming majority of stakeholders and practitioners now use the sobriquet to describe the entire film industry in Nigeria without reservation. Some authors such as Haynes (2011, p. 311-312) and Saro-Wiwa (2009, p. 20) saw the term as referring to Southern Nigerian English-language films and excluding other language productions such as Yoruba and Hausa. This assertion has since been proved incorrect, even though the Hausa-language film industry based in the northern city of Kano is known locally as Kannywood. In my personal conversations with some Kannywood film-makers, including Ahmed Bifa and Abubakar Pamzat, they debunked the idea that Kannywood is separate from Nollywood despite the differences in name. The Yoruba, Igbo, Edo, Efik, and other ethnic/language films, including other Hausa-speaking states in the north have no unique coinage for their industries, but the film-makers of these categories of films have come to embrace Nollywood as the umbrella term for the entire Nigerian film industry including theirs. Moreover, Kannywood remains part of Nollywood considering that the federal government's 3 billion naira (US$20 million) intervention fund/grant scheme for the entire Nigerian film industry was generally reported to have been set-aside for Nollywood in 2013 (Project CT 2013, Vanguard 2013, Nigerian Tribune 2014).

The term was not coined until 1992. For four decades prior to that, the Nigerian film industry had been structured around celluloid technology. There were several years of little or no significant production activity, but it recorded a resurgence in 1992 with the release of *Living in Bondage*, an Igbo-language (the predominant dialect spoken in the eastern part of Nigeria, which is the third of the three main languages in the country) movie. It was the brainchild of Okey Ogunjiofor who sold the idea to Kenneth Nnebue, a businessman who dealt in large-scale importation of blank VHS tapes as part of his broader business (Ogunjiofor 2013). Nnebue instantly saw the viability of the proposal and collaborated with Ogunjiofor in the production of the movie, which was dubbed straight to VHS tapes and sold to the general public without prior theatrical release. The production was financially rewarding as over 500,000 copies were sold. Its success subsequently inspired several other businessmen to venture into film production as a parallel business to their core trade.

Since then, the growth of the US$3.3 billion valued business that is estimated to be worth over US$500 million per annum (Bright 2015; Veselinovic 2015; Rice

2012; BBC News Africa 2012) has spanned the African continent and beyond, largely through the activities of pirates, which makes it difficult to determine how much revenue is generated on yearly basis. The major regulatory bodies such as the Nigerian Film and Video Censors' Board [NFVCB], the Nigerian Copyrights Commission [NCC], and the various film guilds have been unable to successfully track the sales and revenues generated by the industry, which seems to be growing beyond their control. Notwithstanding the low budgets of the high volume Nigerian film productions, the industry employs about 200,000 people directly and created about 1 million indirect jobs (Thisday Live 2013). It is now Nigeria's second largest employer after agriculture (Moudio 2013) and contributed N853.9 billion naira (US$5.1 billion) to Nigerian GDP based on the economic data released by the Federal Government in 2014 (Hazlewood 2014; New Vision 2014; Emelike 2014; Steppes In Sync 2014).

In view of these economic and social changes, this chapter presents the trajectory of this thesis and includes the significance of this study, whilst enumerating and analysing the current challenges and problems bedevilling the Nigerian film industry, what my basic assumptions are, as well as the structure of this research and the methodology with which my conclusions will be arrived at. The principal aim is to ensure a lucid comprehension of this new and unique addition to the knowledge and understanding of the structure and subtleties of Nollywood.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The study of Nollywood has become very important due to its prolific nature, growing popularity, and global relevance. The information released by UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2012 p. 7 – 8), based on data from more than 100 countries in 2009, showed that the volume of film production in Nigeria (987) was more than that of films made in other countries except India. The figures include official cinema and DVD releases. It is noteworthy that Nigerian feature films were mainly shot and distributed on digital video formats, with over 90% of them released straight to DVDs and CDs. This is in contrast to the larger film industries of the United States, India, and other European, North American, and Asian countries where the majority of feature films are released first in movie theatres before their roll out to other platforms.

Table 1. 1: Countries with the Highest Volume of Film Productions between 2005 and 2009

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
India 1,041	India 1,091	Nigeria 1,559	India 1,325	India 1,288
Nigeria 872	Nigeria 1,000	India 1,146	Nigeria 956	Nigeria 987
United States 699	United States 673	United States 656	United States 759	United States 734
Japan 356	Japan 417	China 411	China 422	China 475
China 260	China 330	Japan 407	Japan 418	Japan 448

Table is based on the UNESCO Institute for Statistics Data released in 2012

Nollywood films are increasingly pervasive across and beyond Africa, and the industry was estimated to be worth between US $200 to 300 million annually as at 2006 (The Economist 2006). By 2012 this figure had almost doubled to US$590 million per annum (Rice 2012; BBC News Africa 2012). Nigeria now accounts for over 50% of films made and distributed in Africa (Proudly African 2013), making it the biggest and the most active film industry on the continent. Nollywood now dominates the African market and subsequently influences the way stories are told in the other African countries that are keen to employ its successful formulas. Scholars now refer to it as the new model for African Cinema (Pasley 2011, p.6; Bisschoff 2014, p.11; Hodgson and Bayfield 2017, p. 5). The industry is based around high volume and low budget productions whose budgets are between US$25,000 and US$50,000 for over 90% of the films. Low budgets are due not only to a scarcity of capital, but also to precautions employed by film-makers to limit the damaging consequences of piracy.

Figure 1.1 *Map of Nigeria (UNC School of Education 2013)*

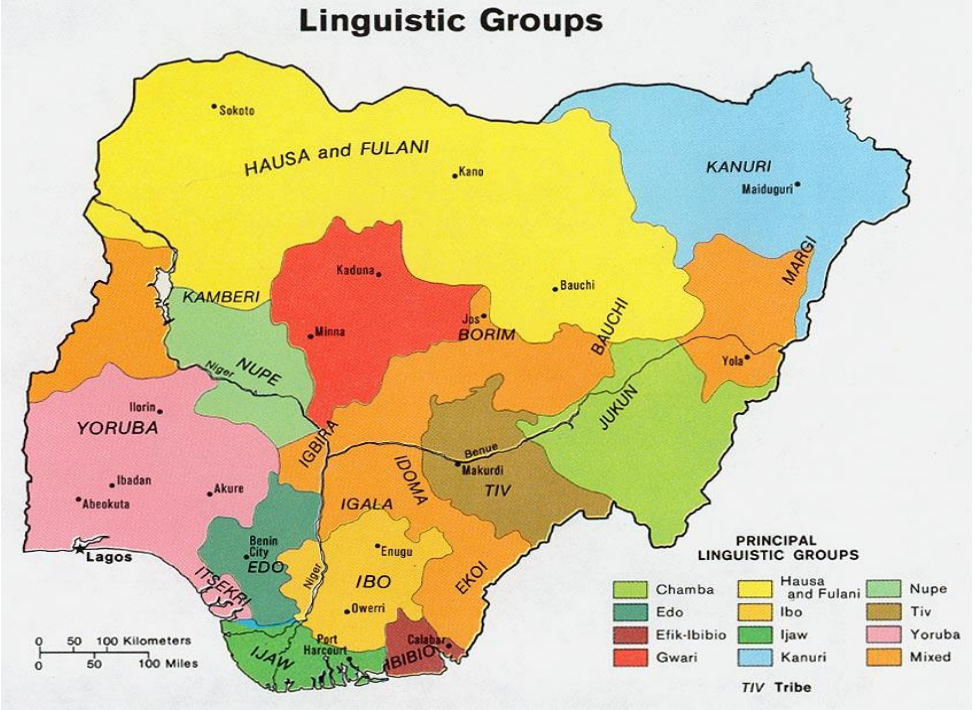


Table 1. 2: Number of feature films by language group

LANGUAGE	2010	2011	2012
English	127	45	13
Yoruba	470	128	7
Igbo	1	1	-
Hausa	291	152	23
Bini	29	18	1
Efik	-	-	-
Ibibio	-	-	-
Pidgin English	1	-	-
Others	2	1	-
TOTAL	**921**	**345**	**44**

The figures on the table do not reflect the total number of films made in the country, but are based on the statistics provided by NFVCB for the aggregate of films it censored in the period highlighted.

It is difficult to determine the exact number of films made in Nigeria because the NFVCB only keeps count of films presented to it for censorship. These are films that go through official public/commercial cinema screening and/or DVD release, with censorship as a prerequisite to acceptance by marketers and distributors. It does not count films released on other platforms and media, such as video-hosting sites like YouTube, Irokotv, and several others that are partially self-regulatory. Though, it must be noted that in contrast to NFVCB figures, from my on-the-field observation and discussions with film-makers in Nigeria between 2013 and 2015, it is evident that films are still being shot in large volumes, but very few are being censored.

The Nigerian film industry is generally fraught with a structural conundrum that has derailed its aptitudes. But its major strength has been the entrepreneurial spirit of the film-makers, who successfully embraced the video format at a time that other film industries were using the 35mm film format. Cheap video cameras continue to provide the film-makers with the opportunity to tell their stories to empathetic audiences without big budgets that could have been difficult to recoup given the economic situation of the country.

Williams (2011, p.13) affirmed that, "Nigeria's nascent movie industry operates in a land without a robust national infrastructure". This problem is not peculiar to Nigeria; in *Third World Film Making and the Wes*t, Roy Armes lucidly describes how the political, socio-economic, and industrial structures of colonialism were set up to serve the needs and purposes of the imperialist powers, rather than providing long-lasting benefits to their colonies. As a result, policies and structures of post-independence Third World countries – including Nigeria – continued to be of far greater benefit to the former colonial powers like Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, and the United States of America who made sure that the protection of their interests were guaranteed by handing the reins of power within their respective colonies to individuals and institutions that best served their purposes. Similarly, Teshome (1982, Pg.1) asserts that the interests of governments of third world countries in cinema is usually limited to propaganda that are auspicious to their own use.

Armes (1987, p.70) explains that an examination of the economic and class origins of Third World national cinemas is one way to understand them. Nollywood is a microcosm of larger Nigerian business and industrial structures and there are myriad problems experienced by film-makers in Nigeria. Some of these problems include: extremely low budgets; dearth of studios and the lack of training facilities and

equipment for aspiring film-makers; chronically bad audio output in many of the films; short and chaotic production schedules that often involve complete production of feature films within days even while lead actors work on multiple films; piracy; unreliable power supply resulting in virtually every household in Nigeria owning and using noisy power generators that render clean location audio near-impossible; greed, frictions and factions within the various guilds – which meant that there was no unified voice for the purpose of grants, loans, and proactive copyright laws and bills that will be beneficial to the film industry. To these might be added broader social issues such as security lapses, corruption, and bad roads.

It is important to confront this question in order to give direction to countries with better structures, yet, still struggle to make a mark in the global sense. Therefore, listing some of the most visible challenges to film production that have been mostly highlighted by stakeholders and interest groups will help to give a broader sense of the social and industrial context within which Nollywood functions. These endemic problems include:

Paltry Budgets

Disjointed industrial structures and almost non-existent access to government grants and other forms of substantial financial investment are major drawbacks to movie producers in Nollywood. The exchange rate between the Nigerian currency, the Naira and the US dollar is very wide and has been subject to constant unpredictable changes over the decade. One U.S. dollar has recently oscillated between to 360 naira and 500 naira. Hence, any converted sum will be an approximation only. An average Nollywood feature film has a production budget between US$25,000 and US$50,000. Less than 5% of Nollywood films, like Jeta Amata's *Amazing Grace* (2006) and *Black Gold* (2011) can boast of production budgets above $US300, 000.

The government's lack of interest in providing financial assistance and/or creating an investment environment that would sustain the production sector has meant that only determination on the part of resilient individual producers and financiers has held the industry by the thread over the years. It is only recently (2006 to 2011) that corporate organisations like Nigerian Breweries Plc, started to invest in movies as a promotional tie-in for its Amstel Malta Brand with films such as *Sitanda, White Waters,*

Cindy's Notes, The Child, and Alero's Symphony produced on budgets of less than US$130 thousand.

In 2013, the soaring popularity of the Nigerian film industry prompted the federal government to make an unprecedented pledge of 3 billion naira (US$200 million) grant to Nollywood and an additional pledge of a US$200 million loan to help Nollywood producers to improve on the quality of productions. Tony Abulu's *Doctor Bello*, which is the first Nigerian film to debut in American movie theatres, shot on locations in New York and Nigeria, is the first film to have benefited from the loan with US$250 thousand (Semple 2012; Moudio 2013, Agba 2013). This is unlike countries such as the United States of America, Britain, and even Australia, which has far better guild structures for film and an industry that is well regulated, with a lot of support for film-makers through the provision of diverse types of grants and infrastructural support, under the guidance of Screen Australia. In spite of the August 3, 2017 announcement by the Minister of Information and Culture, Lai Mohammed, that the Federal government has granted the Creative Industry an unprecedented "Pioneer Status" in regards to tax break to galvanise corporate investment towards industry transformation and creation of jobs, Government support for film in Nigeria is still minimal (Premium Times 2017; Izuzu 2017). Hence, high volume of low-budget film productions persist all over the country with very little profit made from the majority of them. The highest grossing Nigerian film is *30 Days in Atlanta*, which had grossed over 125 million naira (US$650,000) in Nigerian cinemas by January 2015. It is the first Nigerian film to gross over US$600,000 and one of about 10 to gross over US$150,000 from theatre releases. Over 95% of Nollywood films are dubbed straight to DVD or VCD of which some return no profit at all.

Piracy

Piracy has always been a serious issue for Nollywood, draining the industry of up to 50% of its profit (Mackay 2009). The average life of DVDs on legitimate market shelves is estimated at two weeks before pirates multiply sales across the globe through illegitimate distribution channels that render financial returns to film-makers impossible (Rice 2012). Similarly, there is an unstable phenomenon accelerated by piracy with a wider effect on the business clime in a country such as Nigeria where the formal distribution of films in the informal channels created by piracy is far more

organised and effective than the legitimate channels of distribution. Larkin (p. 298) explains that, "A focus on the mobility, innovation, and provisionality of piracy elides the fact that pirate networks are highly organised and determinative of other sets of relations". The fight against piracy predates Nollywood, yet pirated copies of films are as easy to access as the legitimate copies in most Nigerian communities. This is despite the efforts of the Nigerian police and the Nigerian Copyrights Commission (NCC), which has been empowered by the federal government to apprehend and prosecute those who have infringed on the intellectual properties of others. Nigeria's Copyrights Act was last amended in 1999 and has become even more ineffective given the changes that have taken place in the film industry and distribution process within the last 16 years. The pace of technological advances behind which the law lags is even more discouraging to film-makers considering the slow judicial process, inadequate penalties against offenders, and high legal costs which most of the filmmakers cannot afford (Oyewole 2014).

It is not surprising therefore, that Nigerian films are low cost as producers are weary of losing their investments to piracy. This paradigm is based on simple economic equations; low cost equals low risk. Hence, the lesser the amount of money spent on a film, the lesser the weight of loss incurred from piracy. In relative terms, low costs of production fuels mass production of films. Moreover, the high rate of unemployment and poverty in Nigeria drives people into seeking very cheap products, which in the case of Nollywood is provided by pirated films. Nollywood, as is asserted earlier, is a microcosm of the Nigerian economic and industrial infrastructure and social realities. Larkin (p.309) noted that "Piracy and the wider infrastructure of reproduction it has generated reveal the organisation of contemporary Nigerian society". Unfortunately, piracy is the most effective channel of Nollywood film distribution within and outside Nigeria. Some scholars (Larkin 2004 p. 290; Arewa 2017, p. 23) have given the credit of the popularity of Nollywood, particularly in African countries and the Caribbean to the network of distribution created by illegal film distributors.

Lack of Access to Exhibition Outlets

The managing director of the Nigerian Export Import Bank, Robert Orya, described inadequate exhibition and theatrical infrastructures as some of the problems preventing

Nollywood from realizing its full potential (Udo 2013). Lagos state has a population of about 20 million people, but there are presently fewer than ten cinemas fully dedicated to movie screening across the state. Most theatrical exhibition takes place in ad hoc viewing venues with very limited facilities to enable a decent film viewing experience of an international standard. These makeshift venues do not provide much better than the quality of domestic DVD and VCD players. They cannot guarantee the security of life and property of the audience as provided by the handful of large exhibitors who have a stranglehold on the market.

It was the Silverbird Group-owned Silverbird Cinemas, which opened the first of its international standard cinemas at the Silverbird Galleria in Victoria Island, Lagos in 2004 that re-established the cinema culture in Nigeria. It now has over 50 cinema screens operating in Nigeria and Ghana and monopolised the screening of films before new entrants such as Genesis Cinemas (2008) and Filmhouse Cinemas (2012) could find their foothold in later years.

Most of the few available cinemas showed mainly Hollywood blockbusters and Bollywood films initially, with the excuse that indigenous films attracted very few audiences. Only movie premieres were encouraged by this category of cinemas because of the large amount of money that film-makers were made to pay for the use of the galleria and cinema space for their film premieres. Silverbird cinemas were available for such premieres for between N600, 000 to N1, 000,000 (US$4000 – 6600). It was not until 2007 ensuing complaints by Nollywood producers and fans that Silverbird and other cinemas were forced to allocate a couple of hours per day to Nigerian films. The problem was further compounded by the Silverbird Group's control of most of the functioning cinemas in Nigeria at the time, as it owned over half of the standard cinema screens in Nigeria and ultimately made a decision on the quota of indigenous films that was screened in their cinemas – as at 2009 it was only one film at a time – a situation that restricted access of the larger percentage of cinema-worthy films to adequate distribution channels for public screening. Ironically, as indicated in an earlier paragraph, by January 2014, for the first time since the advent of Nollywood, an indigenous film, *30 days in Atlanta* broke the box office record (foreign and local) in Nigerian cinemas, thereby demonstrating that Nigerians are beginning to show a preference for indigenous films. Although it is noteworthy that the entrant of other cinema groups consequently broke up the dominance of Silverbird Cinemas and many Nigerian films are now being screened, suffice to say that the number of cinema screens

remains grossly inadequate and unable to cater for many more films that were intended for movie theatres.

Limitations of Large Volume Production

The large volume of production does not necessarily equate to the profitability of the industry. Nigerian film production is typified by a proliferation of micro-budget production companies. Although there is an advantage here in terms of creative independence, companies lack the scale to employ specialist crewmembers. The result is that the marketing kinetics of each project is negatively affected. The production of individual films is more inefficient as producers compete rather than cooperate, and costs are increased as spending on production infrastructure cannot be spread across a number of projects. Without the ability to cross-amortize costs and income across a range of films, companies tend to be only as healthy as their last film. This produces huge limitations for the industry as profits come in trickles, partly due to the paucity of funds for marketing and proper distribution across the various theatres and home video markets that cater for Nollywood films all over Africa.

A possible solution could be the merger of some companies to form larger production groups and increase their sphere of influence over production essentials and access funds from banks and other possible sources. In 2007 two leading Nigerian producers, Emem Isong and Vivian Ejike merged to form a company called Nollywood Distribution. The partnership started well by attracting interests from Ecobank Plc and other large investors. However, the merger was short-lived as Emem Isong went on to establish**,** in collaboration with her sister Uduak Oguamanam perhaps the most popular film production company and academy in Nigeria, the Royal Arts Academy.

The other limitation is that the ubiquity of production companies makes it more difficult to act together to tackle film piracy. This has been the biggest drawback to the growth and potential size of Nollywood. The numbers are often not separable from the difficulty encountered in forming a united front that is required to confront film pirates and curtail their activities.

Assumptions in this research project

To understand how Nollywood continues to be relevant to Africans in spite of its limitations, it becomes pertinent to point out some basic assumptions concerning its

continued relevance to its audiences. My first assumption is that Nollywood is a production and distribution industry whose development has been predicated on its low-budget films, which is responsible for the high volume of film production. The second assumption is that it is a popular cinema. I understand this to imply a process of encoding and decoding in line with what Hall (1973, p.128) describes as an object of meanings and messages and Gabriel's (1982, pg.1 & 2) reference to the inherent attribute of "Third Cinema" which ties with the social life, ideologies and conflicts of the times within the society and corresponds to "cultural tastes and political needs of the society it represents" as advocated by Third World film-makers.

It is important that popular film production constitute symbols that can be identified and decoded by its targeted audience in an empathetic and relative way. The understanding of the encoded message is channelled through the vehicle of language that the audience must be familiar with, thus leading to an interest in and most importantly, discussion of the embedded meaning. The meaning, which in some cases could be divergent, may be interpreted separately as well as collectively by each member of the audience depending on their unique experiences and relation to the message and therefore, leading to social interactions on the basis of the production. This discursive form is what helps the circulation of the message.

Nollywood is a production and distribution industry that speaks a language that is familiar to Africans. This language is not a particular dialect, but in terms of behaviour, mannerism, signs, and symbols that are understood by Africans and conveyed through the audio-visual medium. The process of production and distribution is then inextricable from this language and its cultural relativity, thereby explaining why these films are popular in most African countries. Hall's assertion that there can be no 'consumption', if no 'meaning' is taken, further explains the relationship between the films and the audiences. In other words, the continued consumption of Nollywood films across the African continent is a form of feedback to film-makers, which indicates the high level of understanding of the messages and pleasures encoded in the films. The third assumption is that the success of any film is tied directly or indirectly to the choice of genre that is interlaced to a specific audience at any given time. Thus, my first and second assumptions are inalienable from the third. In essence, the amalgamation of low budget and the language used to convey an intended message to a target audience are within the specificity of genre. Nollywood film genres are diverse and the diversity provides options to the Nollywood audience. The availability of these options is partly

responsible for the growing relevance of Nollywood, particularly on the African continent and black diaspora, despite the intractable myriad of problems still plaguing the industry.

RESEARCH STRUCTURE AND METHODOLOGY

This research is industrially-based and ethnographic in nature, incorporating interviews with key practitioners in Nollywood (script writers, producers, directors, actors, marketers/distributors, and regulatory bodies), a number of whom I have been privileged to work with, or have made acquaintances with, during the course of my last twenty years of practice as a script writer and producer in Nollywood. These include Emem Isong, CEO of the Royal Arts Academy, Film Marketer/Distributor and one of the most prolific producers in Nigeria, Lucky Geo, the immediate past chairman of the Anti-Piracy Committee of the Nigerian Marketers' Union, and Zik Zulu Okafor, award-winning journalist and former president of the Association of Movie Producers.

The interviews will enable this study to find answers to the central research question from the perspective of those who have been active players in the industry during its incubatory and current era. My aim here is to complement to the reliance on the often-hypothetical perceptions found in many literary resources on Nollywood. The active practitioners, more than anyone else, will be able to give an overview of factors that produced their success when the going was good and what the turning points were when DVD sales and, by extension, production volumes began to nosedive as demonstrated by NFVCB data. There are also other film-makers who have consistently made extensive profits from their films over the years and have remained relevant to the development of Nollywood from inception in the early 1990s to date. It is pertinent to find out what sets them apart from the rest of the pack. Attention will also be given to documents published by informed industry commentators, scholars and critics, and the relevance of their commentary on the art of storytelling in Nollywood and other West African film industries.

There will be close analysis of films and literature surveys to identify the distinctive aspects of Nigerian film-making in relation to the impact of scripts and Film Genres on marketing and distribution as there is presently no up-to-date comprehensive treatise of the industrial structure of Nollywood. The focus on Film Genres will include other studies that concentrate on audience behaviour and reception. Hence, Reception

Theory (as propounded by Hans-Robert Jauss, and highlighted by Stuart Hall) and Hans Kamp's Discourse Representation Theory (DRT) will be important to this work, given that its main thrust is in the proposition that meaning must be taken by an interpreter in the context of utterances made, rather than taking the utterances in isolation. In essence, the antecedents of a sentence must be taken into account in arriving at the meaning of the utterance. The interpretation of Nollywood films by its vast audiences has been crucial to the growth and development of the industry in terms of their relationship to them and symbolic vehicle constituted in the rules of language that Hall described. Constituted within this rules are the idioms and expressions that are unique, fascinating, and endearing to the African and which have been a hallmark of the bulk of Nollywood films. The analysis of the various theories mentioned will be put side by side with the existing literature on Nollywood and the outcome of the proposed interviews. This will give a clearer picture of what makes Nollywood what it is today in relationship to both regional and global creative industries, as well as the role of the audience in the determination of the future of the Nigerian Film Industry.

CONCLUSION

Having constructed the foundation for this thesis with concise explication of the research objectives, it is now imperative to explore and analyse some existing work on Nollywood in order to establish the extent of scholarship enacted in this area of research. The emphasis will be on prior work that frame this project, such as academic books and journals and other literature that are significant to the development of my argument. Consequently, this literature review chapter establishes the key and pioneering studies which have contributed to the current discourse on Nollywood whilst updating such available information with new and original contributions that will significantly expand global knowledge and perhaps data of the Nigerian film industry. There will be particular emphasis on the industrial structure of film and distribution in juxtaposition with genre and audience reception.

2. REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

Most of the articles on Nollywood were written recently due to a surge in the reputation of the Nigerian film industry. There are several categories of literature on the Nigerian film industry. They vary from audio-visual documentaries, written personal accounts by individuals who revealed their experiences within the industry, to academic articles and books.

There are non-academic books, including memoirs and personal accounts, written by Nollywood practitioners based on insider knowledge, as is the case with Charles Novia's *Nollywood Till November: memoirs of a Nollywood insider* (2012) and literature that is based on a combination of photo compilation and texts on Nigerian films like Pietre Hugo's *Nollywood* (2009).

There are edited academic books that attempted to cover a broad spectrum of the Nigerian film industry from a brief historical perspective and then the video phenomenon that is based on low-cost production. These books have covered production, distribution, and exhibition of Nollywood films from its early days and have served as academic references for many other literature that have been written on Nollywood. Particularly outstanding are those edited by Jonathan Haynes (2000) and Pierre Barrot (2009).

Reception-based literature about the growing popularity of Nigerian films in both regional and global terms, particularly amongst Africans in the Diasporas and Caribbean film markets are also common. This category of literature also delves into the international recognition of the industry as a fast-growing creative industry. *Global Nollywood: The Transnational Dimensions of an African Video Film Industry*, edited by Matthias Krings and Onookome Okome (2013) is the most exhaustive of this category of academic literature.

There is also literature on the various indigenous Nigerian language films such as Osakwe Stevenson Omoera's scholarly contributions to Benin-language films (2008; 2012; 2013), investigations into Yoruba-language films by Onookome Okome (1991; 1993), Hyginus Ekwuazi (1994), Durotoye Adeleke (1995; 2005; 2007; 2009), Wole Ogundele (1997), Afolabi Adesanya (1997), Obododinma Oha (2002), Daniel Seiffert (2004), Olufadekemi Adagbada (2005; 2008) Adewale Rafiu (2007), Connor Ryan

(2012), and Saheed Aderinto (2012). Academic contributions into Hausa-Language films by Muhammed Bala (1992), Hyginus Ekwuazi (1997), Yusuf Adamu (2004), Mathias Krings (2004), Abdallah Uba Adamu (2007; 2009; 2010; 2011), Muhammad Muhsin Ibrahim (2012), and Isa Yusuf Chamo (2012). Igbo-language films have also been the focus of incisive studies by Anyanwu Boniface (1995), Hyginus Ewkuazi (1997), Nwachukwu-Agada (2007), Chukwuma Okoye (2007), Nnamdi Malife (2008) and Stefan Sereda (2010). In *Nollywood Unbound: Benin Language Video-Film as Paradigm,* Omoera (2013) expressed a concern that academic and professional discourses of the 3 dominant Nigerian language film cultures (Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo) have clouded the importance and dynamism of the other indigenous film cultures such as Idoma, Efik, Nupe, Ebira, Ibibio, Itshekiri, Ijaw, and Benin. He pointed out that these minor film cultures also have a vibrancy that should not be ignored. For example, about 400 Benin language films have been made till date, and this number as well as their cultural statement and impact, he argues, should raise the consciousness of film scholars to the significance of this subsection of indigenous films as an integral part of Nollywood.

Another category of literature explores gender and class representation in Nigerian films, especially those that suggest that women have been negatively represented in Nigerian films over the years. (Okunna 1996, Azeez 2010, Okome 2012, Usaini et al. 2017*).* These references combine with the historical and recent contexts of the Nigerian film industry with a view to clarifying the low-budget production patterns, platforms, and language of these films and the way that they ultimately impact on distribution and audience reception.

1. Practitioner memoirs

In *Nollywood Till November: Memoirs of a Nollywood Insider***,** Charles Novia writes the personal account of his experiences as a budding film-maker and his journey to becoming a famous Nollywood producer, director, actor, author, and blogger. It provides an insight into historical development, politics, marketing and distribution intrigues, including a variety of events as they happened in Nollywood between 2000 and 2012. His narrative is representative of many film-makers in the Nigerian film industry and it also focuses partly and importantly on the reception of films and audience categorisation and classification. It essentially highlights the processes of this

low-budget and high volume industry from the perspective of the writer and the connection of the Nigerian and African audience to these films; which is very relevant to the concept of encoding and decoding that I made references to in earlier paragraphs, and which will be revisited on a broader scale in the course of this research.

Though the book delves into his business as a music-label owner under the November Records brand from 2004, there is a lot to take out of the memoir for the purpose of this theses as it covers diverse areas like pre-production, production, and post-production as well as marketing and distribution channels of Nollywood films, which gives details of the intrigues and difficulty that abound in the marketing and distribution of films in Nollywood during the period it covered. It partly reveals the relationship between films, film-makers, and marketers who doubled as distributors and the mistrust that abounds between the former and the latter. He describes some of the Idumota-based marketers as pirates and claims that some marketers were in the habit of altering sales figures in order to short-change the owners of the films, which partly undermined the growth and development of Nollywood.

Pieter Hugo's photobook *Nollywood* brings us face to face with the conflict between art cinema and popular cinema as an approved model for African cinema. It draws a comparison between films made by francophone West African directors, who prized art and ideas over entertainment, and Nigerian films (Saro-Wiwa, p.18). The juxtaposition of the two created a sharp contrast given that the West African francophone countries received grants from European countries which enabled them to make films that at the end were sparsely seen by audiences besides film festivals, universities, and embassies on whose archives they usually ended. In Nigeria, quick financial returns are prioritised over art. The majority of the films were shot in less than a week and Abani (p.9) goes further to reveal that the scriptwriting process was even faster. He remarked that a feature script could be written in two days.

These descriptions of Nollywood films principally highlight the position of Nollywood critics and is relevant to this thesis in drawing a connection between the shortcomings highlighted in them and the audiences' continued interest in the films. Saro-Wiwa referred (p.17) to Nigerian films as "Extreme Soap" and praised Nollywood as the first truly popular African indigenous cinematic culture. In contrast, Hugo's pictorial depictions of Nollywood are sensationalist exaggerations of Nigerian film images, accompanied by inaccurate generalisations about Nollywood. This unsurprisingly attracted vehement condemnation from the practitioners in mainstream

Nollywood, who view his publication as a deliberate attempt to undermine the nascent Nigerian film industry by sensationalising and ridiculing the industry and appealing to the stereotypical imagination of the western world about Africa (Anyaogwu 2010).

2. Academic Analyses

Over the years, Jonathan Haynes has made substantial academic contributions to international knowledge of the Nigerian movie industry. By the time his first major collection, *Nigerian Video Films* was edited in 2000, Nollywood was already making a significant impact on audiences outside Nigeria, though it remained relatively alien to the western world. This anthology has a number of contributors, such as Onookome Okome, Afolabi Adesanya, and Brian Larkin. It provides an overview of the pre-Nollywood cinema history, a critical look at the history, predominant styles and genres, and the development of the various language films (Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo) domiciled in Nollywood. Haynes' book also gives an insight into the relationship of the three major tribes that make up the Nigerian polity (Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa) with film productions – this includes the various activities of the Yoruba travelling theatres that lasted for decades up until the 1980s and how they shaped the Nigerian film, TV, and video media. Their metamorphosis from folkloric stage performances to television and video is further explored by Wole Ogundele (p. 89 – 130); while Ekuazi's treatise of the Igbos and their relatively phlegmatic approach, particularly to films in their own language is profound in so many ways, given that it was an Igbo-language film that led to the resurgence of the Nigeria film industry and kick-started Nollywood as it is known today. His outlook on the *Igbo Video film* and the generalised perception of the book in relation to the structure of Nigerian film industry will make the *Nigerian Video Film* a reference point among others in treating the chapter that deals with *The Structure of the Various Nigerian Language Films*, as it is germane to the overall outlook of this thesis.

While the book gives very helpful information and analysis of Nigerian films prior to the year 2000, a lot has changed since then. Marketing and distribution structures and options have widened with the entrance into the sector of on-line film streaming companies such as Irokotv and Ibakatv, which are providing additional financial incentives and improved contracts to film-makers. *Nigerian Video Films* also makes a perceptive review of selected home videos of the 1990s such as Tunde Kelani's *Ti Oluwa Ni Ile*, Zeb Ejiro's *Domila*, and Tunde Lasode's *Sango*. Haynes points out

that the films were generally marginalised in film festivals, largely due to the fact that "they were something between television and cinema, and they did not fit comfortably within the North American structures of either". Virtually all the African cinema festivals accepted only films on celluloid and Nigerian films were basically on the video medium. This has since changed as Nollywood metamorphosed from the video format to the digital format (DVD) in the early 2000s. Moreover, not only has there been a great improvement in technical standards, but the film world has since embraced digital technology with film festivals now accepting entries on digital video formats – especially on Digital Cinema Package [DCP].

Haynes assumes that films reflect the social, cultural and urban environments from which they stem. This is the ideology of his article "*Nollywood in Lagos, Lagos in Nollywood*." Unlike *Nigerian Video Films,* Haynes, in this journal article concentrates his discussion on the influence of the social and economic life of the city of Lagos on Nigerian films. This is because films more than any other medium purvey the country's image to the rest of the world and most visible in these images is the cityscape of Lagos and its social milieu. Hence, Nigerian films should be viewed in the context of their social connection to the city of Lagos, which is now regarded as the fastest growing megacity in the world (Akpome 2017, p.103). He describes what characterizes and shapes the Nigerian film industry, while looking at the relationship between the production environment and the end product:

> Lagos is where Nollywood is primarily located, and for budgetary reasons its films are always shot on location, most often in Lagos, which serves as the ground of the films, not just in the immediate sense that when the camera is switched on, they make the images of Lagos (or one might even say, Lagos imposes itself on them), but also that the films are a means for Nigerians to come to terms – visually, dramatically, emotionally, morally, socially, politically, and spiritually – with the city and everything it embodies.... Nollywood is part of that cityscape....This cityscape is a resource that the films share and an environment that shapes them mentally (Haynes, 2011, p. 311).

Following the success of *Living in Bondage*, the predominant background of Nollywood films was the Lagos metropolis. This is despite a shift of preference by a number of film producers to locations in Enugu and Asaba, as well as the several

uncelebrated Hausa-language movies that were filmed in various Northern Nigeria states. Generally, films are shot on regular basis all over the country, mostly in cities. That is why Okome (2007, p. 10) described Nollywood as the "medium of the Nigerian city" rather than depicting it as the medium of Lagos city.

Yet it must be emphasized that the most popular locations still remain within the Lagos metropolis. Lagos is personified in so many ways through the ubiquitous cityscape outlining most of these films: the terrible pothole-ridden roads that successive governments never seem to have the willpower to fix, the sky scrapers that outline the skies of Lagos Island; the huge and sometimes bogus mansions that project the image of their owners in pockets of places around the metropolis; the flyovers and bridges that make Lagos distinct from other states of the country; the noisy audio that still persist in majority of the films as a result of perpetual power outage that makes the shooting process almost impossible without the use of power generating sets, which are almost always very noisy; the traffic gridlock that usually brings the city to a halt on daily basis; and the survival instinct that drives the entire city which is pressed by the survival of the fittest and the-winner-takes-it-all mentality that precipitates the high crime rate.

The thrust of Haynes' assertion is that the environment is not only evident in the picture, but also largely influential on the stories, which epitomize the hustle and bustle of the city. This ranges from the politics to the socio-economic and religious inclinations of the larger part of the populace. He states that (Pg. 313): "The Nigerian film industry has had no money with which to construct its own visible spaces" as a result of the myriad of problems, including piracy, that are crippling its financial returns; hence, "Nollywood is not a place" (Pg. 313) as is the case with Hollywood in Los Angeles, but rather a term that generally refers to the Nigerian film industry. To get a firm grasp of what Nollywood is, the understanding of its predominant locations and settings are imperative as part of the film language to which Nollywood audiences are attracted. This is in consonance with the idea of symbolic vehicles constituted within the rules of language as described by Hall. Therefore, *Nollywood in Lagos and Lagos in Nollywood* is in many ways vital to the overall understanding of this thesis.

The inextricable relationship between the city (particularly Lagos) and Nollywood is again emphasized in Onookome Okome's *Nollywood, Lagos, and the Good-time Woman*, with the emphasis that Nollywood is not just a medium of the city but that it is redefined by the city everyday just as it was in its early days. (Okome, 2012, Pg. 180). Okome's treatise of the symbiotic relationship between the City and

Nollywood is largely in consonance with Haynes. The city life that is embodied by Lagos and other metropolitan areas of Nigeria is an interesting mirror of the lives of many Nollywood audiences that are able to empathise or draw a connection between the stories and themselves or their families and friends; hence, the attraction to these films. Such is the case with Zeb Ejiro's *Domitila* (1996), a film that Okome glowingly reviews in this literature. It is essentially the first film to be made almost entirely in Pidgin English, which can be described as the unofficial Lingua franca of Nigeria and many English-speaking west African countries (as evident in Leonardo Dicaprio's impressive delivery in Edward Zwick's 2006 political war thriller film, *Blood Diamond*). It was the most publicised film in Nigeria at the time of its release because of the producer's collaboration with DAAR Communications, owners of Africa Independent Television [AIT] and RayPower FM, which were arguably the two most popular TV and radio stations at the time.

Besides the emphasis on the relationship between the narrative practices of Nollywood and the city, Okome supports the view that Nollywood audience is made up mainly of the 'popular audience', such as petty traders, barbers, hustlers, "Brokers in the informal sectors as waged employees" (pg. 167); that is, people that somehow take solace and draw inspiration from the melodramatic plots of these films, which most often than not have resolutions that suggest that there is always hope in a thorny journey of life; This is true to an extent, but then, the upper-class citizens also watch a lot of these films.

Okome also dwells on the seeming marginalisation of feminism through a 'deeply masculine' portrayal of the images of women of the city (Pg. 180). Though Nollywood has a higher percentage of male producers and directors, there are a significant number of female producers and writers. Some of the most celebrated producers and writers of the past and present (Amaka Igwe, Ego Boyo, Emem Isong, Omoni Oboli, Uduak Oguamanam, Mo Abudu, Tope Oshin, and a host of others) are women. While men make up the bulk of directors, it may be tempting to think that their interpretation of scripts, including those written by women must have been from a masculine perspective, but there is the general belief amongst film producers that the audience is dominated by female enthusiasts and Nollywood films continue to be very popular and appreciated by women; perhaps because of the level of empathy that they share with the characters portrayed in the films. In my conversation with Emem Isong, she readily attests that the majority of her audiences are women, which is in consonance

with Novia's (2012, p. 33) assertion that "80% of the audience for Nollywood films are women because the movies massively appeal to them".

Female writers, producers, and directors themselves do circumspect research of the Nollywood audience and the production of films that this audience empathize with, which in reality is not so different from the direction of their male counterparts (except in extreme cases). The voyeuristic images portrayed in films such as *Games Women Play, Silent Scandals, Weekend Getaway,* and such films written and produced by women, seems to resonate with audiences, despite its depiction of the 'good time women' described by Little (cited in Okome, 2012). Nollywood as an industry is largely audience-driven and sustained as most of the producers' choice of scripts and genre are a reaction to the popularity and commercial success of films that have been released. Therefore, if women make up the larger percentage of film audiences that saw a commercially successful film and the films are voyeuristic, then, there is always the tendency for film-makers to tilt their productions in that direction and adopt those successful formulas.

3. Reception-based Studies

The essence of Okome's research is to elaborate on the factors that sustained the growth and acceptance of Nollywood beyond Africa. *Nollywood, Lagos, and the Good-time woman* scratched the surface with Zeb Ejiro's account of audience connection with *Domitila,* and what people may be attracted to in films. In his earlier discussion of Nollywood audience and spectatorship, Okome (2007, p. 13 – 16) outlined Nollywood spectatorship in terms of viewing spaces that he referred to as a form of "coming together", in reference to Karin Barber's argument (p. 6; Barber 1997, preliminary 353) that a new form of "coming together" is a way of studying popular audiences in Africa. Okome (p.6) identified two main forms of video consumption as Street Sites and Video Parlour. The street sites are ad hoc spaces located on the streets where video audiences gather to watch films without being charged a fee on most occasions, and this could be in front of video and music stalls that are visible in most parts of Nigerian cities. The Video Parlour is a more organised viewing space where low income audiences are charged meagre fees to watch films, despite the absence of comfort and equipment that are present in more orthodox viewing spaces like the movie theatres. He explains further in *Nollywood: Spectatorship, Audience and the sites of Consumption* (2017; p.

400) that it is these uncontrolled sites of consumption that most reflect "the democratization and purpose of Nollywood". These articles are essential to understanding Nollywood audiences and consumption in relationship to marketing and distribution within and outside Nigeria, as will be done in the latter chapters of this thesis.

Global Nollywood: The Transnational Dimensions of an African Video Film Industry is an insightful look into how far-travelled Nollywood is – its influence and embrace, not only on the African continent, but also all over the world. The book discusses the processes of transnationalization within the Nigerian film industry itself, and the channels of distribution of the films outside Nigeria; the politics and economics of video films as cultural products; the forays of Nollywood film in Europe, America, and the Diaspora in general. It is the first book to do an adept outline of Nigerian films beginning at home in Lagos, and then travelling through the African continent and making impacts on film industries in those countries, some of which go as far as copying Nollywood films and spicing them up with local nuances to make them more marketable. Okome and Kringe (p.1) gave examples of countries like South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda that have used Nollywood film production model to develop their local industries, with Tanzania particularly beginning to capture its regional market as a result of copying this model.

The growth of localized versions of the Nollywood modes of production and storytelling in other African countries is very remarkable given that South Africa for instance, has had a well organised film industry and more professional approach to film-making prior to the birth of Nollywood, and yet Nollywood films are embraced by a good percentage of the movie-viewing population (Voice of America 2013). Monica Dipio (cited in Kringe and Okome, p.3) in a study about Nollywood in Uganda, supports this view by arguing that: "Nigerian film is popular in the sense that it traverses the immediate culture in which it is set as people beyond the borders of the immediate society can identify with it". The book also supports my initial argument that the quality of production in Nollywood has improved remarkably in contrast to the earlier years of the industry.

Jedlowski (p. 25) argues that: "Like the India film industry, the role played by diasporic audiences, the production, circulation, and consumption of Nigerian video films became progressively more influential in the past few years". As is visible on the website of the NFVCB, in the past two years or so, there has been a significant drop in

the number of English-language films produced in Nigeria, which coincided with the worst crises faced by the Nigerian film industry in almost nineteen years, at a time when the industry was beginning to experiment with new production and marketing strategies (Jedlowski, Pg. 25).

This is another complex development that this research will focus on, as the technical standard of productions has improved tremendously, with a drop in the quantity of productions seen against the backdrop of structural changes within the industry. There is also the argument that the factors responsible for the popularity and transnationalisation of Nollywood, such as cable networks, pirated video distributions, the Internet, and other informal distribution networks which I will discuss in more detail in the subsequent chapters, are equally responsible for the downward slide of the volume of productions in recent years.

THESIS TRAJECTORY

Building from this literature review, this study comprises of six distinct chapters that will elucidate the structural makeup of the Nigerian film industry with major emphasis on marketing and distribution. Chapter 1 is in introduction to **Nollywood** as the Nigerian film industry, with key research questions, significance of this study, as well as my basic assumptions and research methodology. Chapter 2 is an introduction and overview of the relevant **resources on Nollywood**, a review of literature that is relevant to this thesis and the extent of their relevance. The aim of this chapter will be to establish the distinctiveness and coherence of my approach to the topic, which tries to foreground questions of industrial production and more broadly social consumption. Chapter 3 enables an understanding of Nollywood as the Nigerian film industry that incorporate several language films that are equally as essential as the English-language films. A brief **history of Nollywood** will be discussed. It will delve into the past in order to carve a proper understanding of the current structure of film dissemination. It will possibly forecast a future based on antecedents and present structures that are being put in place, in connection with where Nollywood stands presently in the global film and creative industry that continue to metamorphose with the availability of new technologies. Chapter 4 highlights the importance film genres in Nigeria. Analysis of the various **Nollywood film genres** that have been the bedrock of its growth over the years will be done in this chapter. Particularly as it relates to film reception and discourses in Nigeria

and how this has contributed to the development and sustenance of Nollywood from inception, in line with cultural studies, reception, and discourse representation.

Chapter 5 marks the second part of this thesis and studies the **Industrial Structure of Nollywood.** It focuses on the structures of production within the Nigerian film industry in an order of importance of the various regulatory and licensing bodies, the various guilds and associations, and the significance of their activities to marketing and distribution as well as the current state and possible development and growth of Nollywood. Chapter 6 focuses on the **Economics and Challenges of Direct-to-Video films**, explaining the implication of financial input and output on the optical disc distribution and will explicate how the highest volumes of Nigerian films are marketed, distributed and transported, across the world; starting with the Nigerian geographical axis. How effective or flawed are these distribution networks and how have they affected the development of Nollywood and its survival? There will focus on the Marketing and distribution structure of **Nigerian language films** as well and differentiate between distribution networks of the various language sectors, such as Ibo, Yoruba, Hausa, Bini, Efik, Calabar and several others. How are they adapting to the current economic situation of the industry and the country at large? How are these language films received by people who do not understand what is being said? How do they appeal to audiences outside of the geopolitical area of the films? And how do they make profit? Chapter 7 as the **Conclusion** of this thesis will foreclose this discourse and raise key points of the findings of this research.in regards to the marketing and distribution structure of Nigerian films and propose possible solutions to the structural defects bedevilling the industry.

The structure of the chapters has been arranged in this manner to enable an order that systematically creates an understanding of marketing and distribution structure of Nollywood. This understanding will create a strong and precise investigation of the Nigerian film industry, starting with what it is, production to distribution, and exhibition to reception which will include the perspectives of other authors, and ending with a clarification of my position.

CONCLUSION

This review has thrown light on the production and reception of Nollywood by Nigerians, Africans, and the world at large. Until a holistic research that includes the voices of Nigerian movie practitioners (past and present) is done, the information that continues to emanate from popular authors such as those that have been reviewed, will remain largely academic hypothesis.

Jonathan Haynes' contribution in the journal of African cultural studies – *A Literature Review: Nigerian and Ghanaian Videos*, like his other publications, further highlights the growing relevance of Nollywood in global cinema space. He acknowledges that there has been too much repetition of existing research findings on African cinema and Nigerian video phenomenon (in other words, apart from the literary contributions of few authors, very little knowledge has been added to the initial literary/academic works) and declares that he is equally guilty of boarding this repetition bandwagon (Haynes 2010, p. 106). He explains that these repetitions stem mainly from the general descriptions of African cinema and video films in the form of its introduction to individual audiences across the world:

> One is that the world's ignorance of African videos needs to be repaired piece-meal, one audience at a time, so we keep writing general descriptions. I fear I have sinned in this respect, egregiously (1995, 2000, 2002, 2003a, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b, Haynes and Okome 1998). Perhaps we already have enough introductory material…A second reason for repetition is that West African academic culture tolerates and even enforces it. A third is that when Nigerians go abroad for graduate work and want to work on the videos or when North American or European students get interested in the videos for whatever reason, they likely will have a thesis director or committee to whom the whole topic is new and who have their own disciplinary agendas (Haynes, p.106).

There is presently no current comprehensive treatise of Nollywood that is based on an in-depth participation of the author in the production and postproduction process of Nigerian films including marketing and distribution which are inalienable from the prevalent Nollywood model and its impact on film production as a whole in Nigeria, and Africa, by extension. This thesis will therefore fill a gap in global knowledge, with

the intent of taking a critical look at this emerging African film industry from a practical perspective, and ultimately unravelling the unique formats that catalysed and sustained its growth, and outlining the benefits of its distinctive features to the global creative industries.

3. UNDERSTANDING NOLLYWOOD

INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers an exploration and analysis of the industrial structure of Nollywood, the various film genres, and their impact on film consumption. This discussion is required to comprehend the trajectory of film-making in Nigeria. It is difficult to decipher this thesis without insight into the history of Nollywood, particularly the nine decades preceding 1992 which is as important in the study of Nollywood as is the period of 1992 to date. The metamorphosis from celluloid to video film production between the two periods is significant in many ways to the acclaim that Nollywood is now concomitant with. It is also remarkable that between the second quarter of the 1980s and 1992 there was a long period of seeming inactivity in the Nigerian film business. This period is equally important to this thesis as is the period preceding it, because it was an epoch of reflection, reassessment, and experimentation by film-makers who had hitherto been rattled and rendered redundant by socio-economic and technical factors which will be discussed in this chapter.

The activities that led to the current structural make-up of Nollywood are responsible in part for the formation of the prolific model of video film production that rose precipitously from the first quarter of the 1990s. Ogbechie (2011. Pg. 3 & 4) observes that "Nigeria ... has an equally important history of film and cinema that predates Nollywood yet most discussions of Nigerian cinema today highlight Nollywood's rise while disregarding the historical conditions that enabled its emergence in the first place". Thus, it becomes pertinent to make foray into the past to unearth the quintessence of the structural makeup of the low-cost and high volume model of film production that the country is now identified with. Suffice to say that fragmented structure as an offshoot of the frictional Nigerian polity and socio-economic condition, has always been the bane of the Nigerian film business, which has over the years been an all-comers affair. Many film scholars have categorized the early days of Nollywood as an Informal Creative Industry due to the lopsided configuration of regulation and implementation of rules that has enabled disrupted production, distribution, and consumption practices.

A BRIEF HISTORY

It is noteworthy that prior to the resurgence of the film business in the early 1990s, there was no particular nomenclature for the Nigerian film industry, which started in the first quarter of the 1900s. The first film screening in Nigeria was the initiative of a Nigerian, Herbert Macaulay, who is regarded as the "father of Nigerian nationalism" (Coleman 1971, p.197). The screening was in collaboration with the Balboa Film Company, a Spanish organisation, which was exhibiting silent films in a tour of the west coast of Africa. The films were screened at the Glover Memorial Hall in Lagos Island from August 12, 1903, and it spanned ten consecutive nights with the audience consisting of both colonial and indigenous people (Owens-Ibie cited in Ebewo 2007). The success of the screening spurred a flood of European film exhibitors to Nigeria and soon, the colonial government imported a lot of films. Howbeit they were highly censored. The ideology behind the screening was the propagation of British imperialism as was the case throughout the British Empire following World War 1. The films prominently featured symbols such as the Union Jack and the British national anthem (Burns 2011, p.56; Adeyemi 2010, p. 59). This established the norm of screenings for the next six decades, as successive colonial governments used the power and attraction of the screen to influence Nigerians towards a positive cultural, social, and political inclination to western ways of life. The 1926 silent film, *Palaver*: a Romance of Northern Nigeria, written, produced, and directed by British film-maker Geoffrey Barkas is the first feature film made in Nigeria and first to feature indigenous actors in major roles. Yibber played Dawiya, King of Sura and Yilkuba, the witch Doctor, who acted as himself. The film which was shot in Northern Nigeria among the Sura and Angas tribes of Bauchi Plateau was part of British propaganda and emphasizes the role of Britain in civilising Africa. It describes the featured tribes as Cannibals ten years prior to the period setting of the film. The production of the film followed a call to action by Stanley Baldwin, the British Prime Minister in 1925 when he acknowledged the efficacy of film propaganda. In August 5, 1926, Bioscope (cited in Colonial Films 2010) captured his words in this call to action where he noted the 'danger to which we in this country and our empire subject ourselves if we allow that method of propaganda [film] to be in the hand of foreign countries'. These propagandist activities were aimed at justifying the British occupation of her African Colonies. And so, attempts by indigenous filmmakers to break these stereotypes were quickly thwarted by the British authorities who starved

them of funds and ensured that funding for films were available to British propagandist film-makers only. Thus making sure that the few African stories that were told were manipulated by these British storytellers who plotted them from their own perspective, with the aim of elevating their colonial status. This imperialist approach was spearheaded by the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) and cinema screening during the colonial era lacked indigenous African or Nigerian content and voice that could undermine the authority of the exploitative colonial government until Nigeria was granted independence in 1960. Sam Zebba, an American trained Israeli-Palestinian film-maker and director of *Fincho*, the first colour feature film made in Nigeria, gave credence to the claims of exploitation by the colonial government when he noted (Zebba 2012) the 'harsh colonial exploitation of the natives' during production of the film in Owo, Western Nigeria between 1954 and 1955.

The cast and crew of *Fincho* which was released in 1957 were mainly indigenous, featuring Patrick Akponu in the lead role of Fincho and Comfort Ajilo as Fincho's girlfriend. But by 1962, two years after independence, Latola Film, the first indigenous film company in Nigeria was formed. However it was not until 1970 that *Son of Africa*, co-produced by Segun Olusola became the first feature film produced by a Nigerian company known as Fedfilms Limited, co-owned by Lebanese businessmen. This was followed by the establishment of Calpeny Nigeria Limited, which spearheaded the production of the first independent feature-length film, an adaptation of Wole Soyinka's play: *Kongi's Harvest,* produced by Francis Oladele in 1971 (Ekwuazi 1981, p.18; Diawara 1992, p.7-8, Ukadike 1994, p.144). Even though Nigeria had gained independence at the time of production and release of the film, the influence of the former colonial government remained in virtually every facet of the society, as the distribution and exhibition companies remained in the hands of foreigners who maintained British and western influence in the country. Their apathy towards indigenous films and filmmakers has been described by Enahora (1989, p.103). This made sure that *Kongi's Harvest* was never premiered in Nigeria —a situation to which the Nigerian government acquiesced (Adeyemi 2010, p.61). Nigerian filmmakers found it very difficult to have their films screened in commercial cinemas even though a significant number of cinemas existed. In Lagos alone, the cinema houses included: the Corona, Odeon, Rex, Royal, Kings, Central, Rialto Cinema, Road House, Ikeja Arms, Regal, Capitol, Casino, and Glover Hall. In addition to this, there were branches of Rex and Odeon cinemas in Ibadan.

This demonstrates the way that the early indigenous film producers received little or no support from the Nigerian government, which could have prevailed on the distribution companies and cinemas to create room for the premiere of *Kongi's Harvest*. It is important to add that 'indigenous' in the case of the first two films made by Calpeny Nigeria Limited did not necessarily refer to the entirety of the cast and crew of these productions, given that foreigners directed them. Ossie Davis, an America-based filmmaker, directed *Kongi's Harvest,* and a German, Hans Jurgen Pohland, directed *Bullfrog in the Sun*. This was also the case with few other productions that followed in the 1970s. Adeyemi (2010, p.60) states that true decolonisation in the film industry was not realized until the 1990s.

Unlike the digital video formats on which most Nigerian and indeed African films are shot today, celluloid (35mm and sometimes 16mm) was the format in vogue during the 1970s and 1980s (Ladebo 2004). The shift from celluloid to video is significant in two ways. The first is that the cost of film production was greatly reduced, which enabled many trained and talented Nigerian filmmakers who could not afford to make their own films using the film format to enter the production sector. Lower costs led to the proliferation of film productions that made the volume of Nigerian films the second highest in the world by 2009. Secondly, celluloid filmmaking was abandoned almost entirely, which rendered the film lab in Jos somewhat redundant.

THE MOBILE CINEMA AND THE TRAVELLING THEATRE

The very impressive reception of the initial cinema screening of the Balboa Film Company in Lagos in 1903 gave a clue to the greater benefit that the government could derive from the innovative use of the cinema to communicate its programmes to Nigerians. This propelled the introduction of the mobile cinema medium in order to have a wider reach around the country. As the name suggests, government officials and agencies travelled around the country with films that raised community interest. In the process, they were able to deliver messages that educated Nigerians about issues such as sanitation, nutrition, and general health. In other words, they took advantage of the people's interest in entertainment by placing socio-political enlightenment clips between the screenings. The other benefits that Nigerians derived from the mobile cinema is that it aroused the interest of Nigerians in filmmaking (Ebewo 2007, p.46).

The mid-1970s particularly witnessed a new wave of Nigerian filmmakers who shot films on celluloid and travelled around the country with these very popular films that told African stories from the perspective of Nigerians. Ladebo (2004) recounts that the productions at the time were shot on 35mm camera equipment, which were brought in from England or America and an average production, depending on the level of international involvement, cost between 200 thousand and 500 thousand British pounds each. This new wave of filmmakers did not come out of the blue, as there were already various theatre companies spread across the country, which were able to connect with committed audiences that could not have enough of these productions. The famous Yoruba travelling theatre tradition was very popular for its oral performance mode. In time, the practitioners realized that they could make more profit from their stage plays by filming them particularly for television broadcast. Though, the films produced out of the Yoruba travelling theatre tradition was popular art and mass market form, but were not consumed in cinema theatres.

Adesanya (2000, p.38, 39) describes the involvement of the Yoruba travelling theatre practitioners in motion picture as the most significant factor in the evolution of indigenous filmmaking in Nigeria. He describes Ola Balogun's *Ajani Ogun* (1976) as the film that opened the floodgate of local film productions by Nigerian filmmakers and motivated the idea of the travelling theatre with this box office hit. Before then, Hollywood and Bollywood films were given preeminent places in the cinemas by film distributors who were mostly Indian and Lebanese entrepreneurs. In Lagos, for instance, Indian films particularly dominated cinema exhibition up until the mid-1970s (Jedlowski 2017, p. 6). Local films were hardly heard of during this period and struggled to be profitable. *Ajani Ogun* excited Nigerian audiences and stimulated their appetite for indigenous productions. Prior to 1976, there was a handful of Indigenous English-language films that could not boast of box office success for reasons that include the disconnection of the average Nigerian from the English style and language of production. This is in keeping with Armes's (1987, p.24, 30) observation that only a tiny minority of African populations understood the former colonizer's language, which was often employed by African writers in their works. However *Ajani Ogun* (like films made by most other travelling theatre companies) was in Yoruba language, which was easily understood and embraced by every Yoruba person, regardless of status and level of literacy.

Some of the most prominent indigenous filmmakers of the 1970s and 1980s, that made ground-breaking feature films, include Ladi Ladebo (writer and producer of *Countdown at Kusini*, 1976; Director of *Bisi Daughter of the River*, 1977), Ola Balogun (*Alpha* –1972, *Amadi* – 1975) *Dinner With The Devil* 1975, *Musik Man* 1976, *Black Goddess*, 1978), Eddie Ugbomah (*Rise and fall of Doctor Oyenusi* – 1977, *Death of a Black President* – 1984, *Vengeance of the Cult* – 1984) Adamu Halilu (*Shehu Umar* – 1976, *Moment of Truth* – 1981, *Zainab* – 1982), Bankole Bello (*Efusetan Aniwura* – 1981), Gboyega Arulogun, and Afolabi Adesanya. Over twenty films were released during this period and the entrance of the travelling theatres into the film business made it even more popular and wide reaching. They broke boundaries by travelling with films, not only around Nigeria, but to other West African countries like Benin Republic and Ghana. It was the likes of Hubert Ogunde, (*Aiye* 1979), and Moses Olaiya Adejumo (*Mosebolatan*, 1986) whose tact in recording their plays on 16mm film elevated the cinema to a popular art (Ekuazi cited in Ebewo p.46). These successes were not surprising as their plays included social, cultural, political, and sometimes religious commentaries that made sense to a wider audience. The commentaries touched on pre-independence and post-independence issues that revealed social tensions within a diverse Nigerian society, with the intent of fostering tolerance, respect, and harmonious co-existence of the Yorubas and the Nigerian polity as a whole.

THE DECLINE OF CELLULOID FILMMAKING IN NIGERIA

These success stories of the 1970s that cascaded into the early 1980s soon hit a brick wall that signaled the death of celluloid filmmaking in Nigeria and ushered in a period of relative inactivity, with the exception of very few producers. Not only was there a dearth of Nigerian films from the mid-1980s onward, but also, the death of cinemas swiftly followed. The reason for this and the correlation between them is tied to the growth and decline of the Nigerian economy.

The growth of Nigerian celluloid filmmaking coincided with the oil boom that lasted between 1973 (during the Arab War) and 1977, and rippled into the early 1980s. There was a significant increase in the country's foreign reserves and by 1985 the Naira was stronger than the dollar. Film equipment and processing facilities were not available in Nigeria, which posed a lot of problems for filmmakers who had to rely on postproduction facilities in Europe and America. Import-oriented consumption was

encouraged by the strength of the Naira. This led to the collapse of the external reserves, driven by the decrease in oil earnings when international oil prices became lower. External borrowing followed fiscal deficits and enormous loans taken by the government in 1979 resulted in unstable macro-economic indices (Adedipe 2004, p.2). When the oil boom ended, filmmakers equally began to experience hardship that resulted from the effect of the depreciating value of the Naira and had no sufficiently trained manpower that could operate the few facilities that were available within the country. Adesanya (2006, p. 40) also suggests that the lack of proper marketing channels for distribution and marketing was a key problem, as the majority of filmmakers were forced to distribute their own films. His argument is in line with Enahora's (1989, p.106) conclusion that "The Nigerian film maker is in most cases the producer, director, scriptwriter, distributor and exhibitor. It is impossible for one person to assume all these responsibilities successfully".

Olubomehin (2012, p.6) points out that the decline of cinemas was gradual and was a combination of diverse factors. The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) introduced by the Ibrahim Babangida-led military government was aimed at making positive economic reforms but it dragged the economy backward and almost completely erased the middle class, which represented the core of cinemagoers between the 1970s and 1980s. The result of the inflation that followed led to loss of jobs and the Naira nosedived against other foreign currencies, which made the importation of film equipment unaffordable. A 35mm film projector cost about N800 before the introduction of SAP in 1986, and by 1991 it had increased astronomically to N9000 (Akarue 1992, cited in Olubomehin 2012, p.8). Insecurity precipitated by the inflationary tide in the country affected the nightlife of which Lagos was once proud. According to Shultz (2012, p.242) "movie theaters were dying out because crime and disorder were keeping people home". Entertainment Tax was an extra burden on exhibition (Adesanya 2006, p.39). Another problem that contributed to the decline of cinema in Nigeria is that the creation of more states led to the proliferation of television stations. By 1983, 12 state-owned stations were operating: Ogun State Television, Abeokuta; Television Service of Oyo state, Ibadan; Imo Television, Owerri; Borno Radio Television, Maiduguri; Plateau State Television, Jos; Anambra Television, Enugu; Bendel Television, Benin; Cross-River Television; Kano Television, Kano; Lagos Television, Ikeja; Ondo State Television, Akure. These were In addition to the ten federal government television stations. Television stations began

to air the same films screened in cinemas, which invariably impacted negatively on attendance as people preferred to watch the films in the comfort of their homes and avoid the risk of criminal activities around movie theatres at nights (Ariyo 2012; Olubomehin 2012, p.7). The oil boom had made television sets affordable to middle class Nigerians. Moreover, the cinemas themselves offered nothing different to them, as they could not afford to buy the expensive foreign exchange that would have enabled them to procure the latest Hollywood and Bollywood blockbusters.

This laid the basis for the connection between television stations like African Independent Television (AIT) and the popularity of Nollywood in the 1990s by collaborating with digital video film producers such as Zeb Ejiro (*Domitilla*) and Femi Lasode (*Sango: the Legendary African King*). Also important is the introduction of soap operas like *The New Masquerade, The New Village Head Master, The Cock Crow at Dawn, Mirror in the Sun, Behind the Clouds, Samanja,* and *Second Chance,* screened on primetime television, which kept people glued to their TV sets with cliff-hangers. Television normally helps the film industry by providing new outlets for their production, but a disconnect existed between the film-makers, distributors, and exhibitors on one hand, and the government-owned television stations on the other, as there was no collaboration like those forged between film-makers and TV stations in the mid-1990s onwards. The few cinemas still in operation at that time were still controlled by foreigners who still favoured screening of foreign films. This quagmire was damaging to the business of film-making. Before private broadcasting started in Nigeria following the deregulation of Broadcasting in August 1992, the television stations were funded by government and could not afford to pay television rights for the more expensive indigenous independent films. The foreign films that were broadcast were old and stations found it easier to commission in-house producers to make telemovie series, most of which were broadcast at primetime on the network service of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA).

The arrival of the Video Home System (VHS) seemed to unleash a deadly blow on movie theatres. People were now able to watch the films that television stations were not showing by buying VHS tapes and watching them in the comfort of their homes and at their preferred times. Onyenankeya et al. (2017, p. 4) opines that:

> The arrival of video films "democratised" filmic entertainment in Nigeria, enabling low income families to enjoy theatre in their homes as well as opened

> up a new vista of media environment that was previously closed to a considerable chunk of the population.

The situation was worsened by the availability of pirated video tapes of latest blockbuster Hollywood, Bollywood and Chinese films that became ubiquitous on major streets and video markets situated mainly in Idumota and Alaba in Lagos, Onitsha and Aba among other eastern commercial centres, as well as various city centres of Kano and Kaduna in other northern states. The tepid attitude of the Nigerian government that still exists today gave confidence to the pirates. Piracy is the largest form of film distribution in Nigeria (Lobato 2010, p. 347), and the survival of Nollywood is predicated on the cheap production formats that makes piracy not as devastating as it does to the very expensive celluloid medium (See *The Nigerian Copyright Commission and The Battle Against Piracy of Nollywood Films* in Chapter 3).

By the mid-1990s the once-impressive number of movie theatres (over 300) spread across the country had been decimated and the physical structures had been converted to churches or for other uses. It should be noted however that while the trend of filming on celluloid by commercial filmmakers almost completely died out, there were pockets of production that popped up with the format every year until the late 1990s, but they were either funded by international organisations or government agencies, as was the case with Brendan Shehu's *Kulba Na Barna* (1992) which was the first feature film made by the Nigerian Film Corporation. Another example is Ladi Ladebo's *Pariah* (1994), which was sponsored by United Nations Family Planning Agency.

Arguably, it is the commercial success of *Living in Bondage* that finally stalled celluloid film production in Nigeria. It was shot on digital video format, duplicated on VHS tapes for commercial sales, and above all, it was released in two parts and sold over 500 thousand copies, a feat that the films before it had not achieved (Saro-Wiwa 2009 p.20; Zajc 2009 p.71). It was an absolute phenomenon that suddenly awakened the interest of every film-maker who had managed to survive in the industry. In reality, it was not the choice of digital video camera alone that made it a commercial success considering that other movies had been shot on the format and released for commercial sale by the Yoruba travelling theatre groups when they could no longer afford to make films on celluloid. Even Nnebue had shot some low budget Yoruba films ordinary VHS cameras including *Aje Ni Iya Mi* (1989) with Ishola Ogunmola's Yoruba traveling

theatre troupe on. Hausa language and few English language film-makers had also been shot on digital video format before Living in Bondage. The content of the film and the connection it made with the audience played a major role its commercial success. This led to the realization by industry practitioners that the format on which a film is shot is not more important than the content of the film and the connections that audiences make with it.

THE INFLUENCE OF TV AND THE MELODRAMATIC TREND

When celluloid film making became too expensive and unprofitable for film-makers in the late 1980s, television became the saving grace of most of the film practitioners who were occasionally employed on the entertainment programmes (Shultz, p.242) that became very popular with Nigerians from various ethnic groups. Programmes like *Adio Family, Samanja, Hotel De Jordan, Bassey and Company, Awada Kerikeri, Papa Ajasco* were very popular before newer programmes like *Mirror in the Sun, Things Fall Apart, Checkmate, and Fortunes* (later called *Mega Fortunes*) redefined Nigerian television in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The second group of TV shows particularly captivated audiences' attention and captured the daily life-patterns of various Nigerian socio-economic and political classes of the time, in a way that was similar to the Mexican soap operas that flooded Nigerian television in the late 1980s and 1990s.

Virtually all the crew and cast members of *Living in Bondage* had worked on this later group of soap operas, particularly *Checkmate,* which was still running on Nigerian primetime network television. As a result, the melodramatic influence on Nollywood movies becomes quite understandable. This is what they had become used to and it was difficult to extricate a movie-style production from the soap opera style. Much has been written about the close ties between Nigerian film and soap opera (Saro-Wiwa 2009, p.18). Geiger (2012, p.59) concluded that: "Technically, Nollywood doesn't produce 'films' at all – hence the widely-used term 'video films' – and for many it more closely resembles the television soap operas that in part influenced it".

There are always exceptions to this rule. Films such as *The World is Mine* (2001), *Across the Niger* (2004), *Sitanda* (2006), *White Waters* (2007), *Cindy's Notes* (2008), *Last Flight to Abuja* (2012) and a host of others, cannot be classed as soap opera. It is clear that Nollywood is first and foremost a low-budget commercial industry based on popular plots and genres.

Table 3. 1 Difference between Nollywood and Past Nigerian Cinema

NOLLYWOOD	PAST NIGERIAN CINEMA
Video-based	Celluloid Film-based
1990s to date	1970s and 1980s
High volume of production	Low and median volume of production
Mass market forms	More art cinema or Educational
Consumed in homes	Consumed in cinemas

The figures on the table reflect Nollywood's break away from the past into a new model that is more cost-effective and vibrant.

NIGERIAN LANGUAGE FILMS

Without language films, Nollywood would probably have remained in the doldrums following the redundancy that set into the Nigerian film industry after the mid-1980s. According to the 2012 United Nations Institute for Statistics (UIS) Fact Sheets (Pg. 1) on linguistic diversity of feature films, based on global data survey, Nigeria recorded the highest number of language films among the countries that participated in the 2009 survey with 75% of the 987 films officially released that year. India was a close second. The report further explains that the wide range of language films made in both countries may be responsible for the success of their film industries.

Over 500 indigenous languages are spoken in Nigeria, which is made up of over 250 ethnic groups that fall into 6 regions: North-West, North-East, North-Central, South-West, South-East, and South-South. The three major languages spoken in Nigeria (Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo) represent the 3 major ethnic groups in the country, which are Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo (or Ibo). Some of the most popular minor ethnic groups include Edo, Itsekiri, Ijaw, Efik, Ibibio, and Tiv. Nigerian language films are dominated by the 3 major languages and make up over half of the total number of films in Nollywood. The 2012 UIS Fact Sheets were based on official figures, but the actual figure may be a lot higher as several films have been released without censorship over the years, consequently making it relatively impossible to account for them. English language films made up only 25% of films made in 2009 (Yoruba 54%, Hausa 16%, Bini 4.6%, and Igbo 0.4%) and language films have continued to record higher percentage of releases till date. These figures are not surprising given that *Living in Bondage*, the film that has been credited with the resurgence of Nigerian film industry,

is an Igbo-language film. Its financial success in the film market led to the production of predominantly Igbo films in the early 1990s. This is understandable, as the overwhelming majority of Nollywood film distributors were Igbos, who also dominated the distribution of English-language films on video tapes, and later, on VCDs and DVDs. However, the Yoruba and Hausa films distribution are respectively controlled by Yoruba and Hausa marketers and distributors. These are massive film industries that each has its major hubs in Lagos and Kano. The term Kannywood, which refers to the Hausa-language film industry is reflective of the importance of Kano as the central hub of film distribution in the Northern part of Nigeria. The marketing strategies employed in the sales of the various language films are in most cases unique to each ethnic group as is the distribution networks used to get the films to the consumers. The reason for this distinction is that each language film is specifically targeted at an audience that is principally of that ethnic group or indigenous groups that speak similar or common languages. The principal commonality between all language films is that, like the most English-language films, they are primarily moralistic. But the unique attributes of each of the three major ethnic groups mainly stem from their origins. Yoruba language film is an offshoot of the Yoruba travelling theatre; Hausa language film takes inspiration from Indian films; while the Igbo language film derive from television background, mainly Soap opera (Fuentes-Luque 2017, p.136), Nonetheless, Olaoluwa (2017, p. 1-4) argues that the influence of India on Nigeria and Nollywood is not entirely confined to Northern Nigeria and Kannywood in particular, but has a deeper connection with the entirety of Nigeria both in business and social contexts. Businessmen of Igbo extraction are known to import a lot of products into Nigeria from India more than most other countries. Olaoluwa notes further that this influence delves into film and cites the example of *Indian Doctor,* a film with Indian cultural inflections set in an Igbo locale of Eastern Nigeria. This is besides the role of Indian businessmen in the enterprise of cinema in between the 1960s and mid-1980s.

Yoruba-Language Films

The Yorubas are from the South-West region of Nigeria and make up over 20% of the Nigerian population with over 34 million people. Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Ondo, Osun, and Ekiti are the six states in this region. However, there are other states in the northern and

middle belt regions, such as Kwara and Kogi, which are predominantly Yoruba-speaking. Films are made in all these states, but Lagos state remains the central hub of Yoruba-language film production and distribution. Oshodi on the mainland of Lagos state is now the major and largest Yoruba film distribution market in the country. Although the six states of the south-west region as well as Kwara and Kogi states have been the primary market of commercial films, Yoruba descendants can be found in other African countries, namely, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Benin Republic, and Gambia as well as the Caribbean and the Americas (i.e. Trinidad and Tobago, Haiti, Cuba, and Brazil). Yoruba traditions and culture are practiced in these countries through shared history that originated from the transatlantic slave trade, which lasted 4 decades between the16th and the 19th century. This shared history means a potentially vibrant market for Yoruba-language films and has been partly responsible for their popularity in the countries mentioned.

Historically, Yoruba traditional enactments can be traced back to the Alarinjo which originated from court performances that were based on the re-enactment of myths and legends in the Old Oyo Empire in the early part of the 17th century. They were popularly known as "Eegun Alare or Alarinjo" and premised on the belief in Egungun (Masquerades), which represent ancestral spirits visiting the living. (Adedeji 1979, cited in Adelugba and Obafemi 2004, p. 140; Yeku 2014, p. 172) These masque theatre performances that were based on religious rites soon gained higher prominence by the 18th century with a number of theatre groups plying their trade all over towns and villages in the empire. By the 1900s they had metamorphosed into a number of popular professional travelling theatre troupes. Therefore, the influence of the precolonial oral performing art like that of Alarinjo on the Yoruba popular travelling theatre tradition of the 1970s and 1980s cannot be repudiated despite the eclectic nature of the latter as surmised by Jeyifo (cited in Kerr p. 57, 1990) that exerts indubitable influence on contemporary Yoruba films. The most prominent leaders of the modern theatre groups that emerged during this period include Hubert Ogunde, Duro Ladipo, and Kola Ogunmola, all of whom are credited with bringing the Alarinjo theatre tradition to national and global limelight. The history of Yoruba-language films cannot be written without these three icons, given their creative geniuses in both artistic and business pursuits in the sphere of theatre. It is therefore fitting that a myriad of scholarly work and literature has been done on them, including Beier & Ladipo 1964; Beier 1994; Banham 1976; Clark 1979; Jeyifo 1984; Ogunbiyi 1981; Obafemi 1996; Ogundele,

Obafemi and Abodunrin 2001; Ogundele 2003; Soyinka 1976. Hubert Ogunde is the most celebrated of them. His first major production was an opera, *The Garden of Eden and The Throne of God,* which was sponsored by the Church of the Lord, Ebutte-Metta and performed at the Glover Memorial Hall, Lagos in January 1944. The success of the production inspired him to write and produce more operas as an amateur writer, producer, actor, and director. But in early 1946 he established a professional theatre company known as African Music Research Party and produced his first professional opera titled: *Tiger's Empire.* His passion and drive for production excellence motivated him to hone his performance skills and knowledge at the Buddy Bradley school of Dancing at the Piccadilly Circus, London in 1947. He changed the name of his production company to Ogunde Theatre Company on his return from London in the last quarter of 1947. He broke through the international theatre frontier with performances in Dahomey (now Republic of Benin) in 1946; the Gold coast (now Ghana) in 1948; the Ivory Coast (now Cote d'ivoire) between 1949 and 1950; Montreal, Canada and at the famous Apollo Theatre in Harlem, New York in 1967; Great Britain in 1968; Milan, Italy in 1969. He wrote over 60 stage plays/operas and produced approximately 100 songs. His first film production was *Aiye* (1979), after which he went on to produce 3 other films (*Jaiyesimi* in 1980, *Aropin N'tenia* in 1982, and *Ayanmo* in 1986), all of which were shot on 35mm celluloid (Lindfors 1976; Oduguwa 2015). In 1971, he founded and became the first president of the Union of Nigerian Dramatists and Playwrights, which today is known as the Association of Nigerian Theatre Practitioners (ANTP).

Hubert Ogunde greatly inspired other theatre practitioners and film-makers through his dedication and professional approach to production, it was Ola Balogun's *Ajani Ogun* that was the first Yoruba film in cinema in 1977. There have been several others since then. It is noteworthy that the transition from stage to screen for the travelling theatre groups was relatively smooth with regards to audience patronage as most of them simply adapted their plays for the screen. The success recorded by *Ajani Ogun* cannot be extricated from Ola Balogun's collaboration with Duro Ladipo Theatre Company, which was already very popular with the Yoruba audience as one of the leading travelling theatre troupes in the country. Audiences were already familiar with the actors and the plays, and simply embraced the new medium with delight. Some of the other popular Yoruba film-makers of the past include Adeyemi Afolayan (*Kadara* – 1981, *Taxi Driver* – 1983), Isola Ogunsola (*Efunsetan Aniwura* – 1982), and Moses

Olaiya (*Orun mooru* – 1984, *Are Agbaye* – 1984). Tunde Kelani is the most prominent of the contemporary Yoruba film-makers. His films include *Ti Oluwa Ni Ile* (1993), *Ayo ni mo fe* (1994), *O le Ku* (1997), *Arugba* (2008), and *Maami* (2013). The other prominent contemporary Yoruba-language film-makers are Jide Kosoko, Kunle Afolayan, and Funke Akindele, all of whom like Tunde Kelani, occasionally make English-language films. When asked why his films are different to the typical Nollywood films by Tobore Ovuorie of Premium Times, Kunle Afolayan, who has been credited with re-introducing Nigerians to cinema (The Guardian 2011), highlighted the influence of the Yoruba travelling theatre model on his art. He discloses his creation of balance through a synthesis of what was obtainable then and the contemporary Nollywood model and goes further to reveal his experience with the Yoruba travelling theatre of his late father, Afolabi Afolayan:

> Mobile cinema was what was in existence because I used to travel with them then and we would go from one town to another. We had a vehicle and in it we had sound system, 16mm projector, tickets and all of that so that when you get to a town, we set up, do propaganda and announce to people that there's going to be a screening and all that. That was the culture I grew up learning… I started traveling with my father's crew when I was 12 years old. When I was 18, I used to go on my own. Some agents used to come from places like Benin republic and would book the films for screening and I would now take the prints with me to them because we don't release prints and after they finish, they pay the balance and I would come back with the prints. In the course of doing all these, I learnt how to operate the 16mm projector and how to run the entire business chain. But now, it's a bit different but the business angle of it is still similar to what is happening now. Apart from the ticketing software that has been introduced, every other processes- set up, remain the same. (Ovuorie 2016)

Kunle Afolayan's Yoruba-language supernatural thriller, *Irapada* was the first indigenous Nollywood film in movie theatres. It premiered at the Silverbird Galleria in Lagos in 2006 and grossed 5 million naira, consequently giving insight to the box office potentials of Nollywood films in cinemas. Nollywood films have continued to increase in clout at movie cinemas with impressive turnovers.

Yoruba-language films account for over 10% of films made in Nigeria and the success of the Nigerian film industry cannot be written without the significance of Yoruba language films, which can be described as the most vibrant indigenous language-film industry in Nigeria. This is not surprising as the Yoruba film practitioners have from inception of indigenous Nigerian film production to date been at the forefront of utilizing "grassroots technology and folkloric elements to promote communal life" as perceived of Nollywood and Ghollywood films by Jessica Tiffin (2016, p. 229, Cited in Anderson-Holmes 2017, p. 171). The genres are diverse and similar to that of English-language films. They include Romance, Comedy, witchcraft/horror, religious or evangelical, epic or Historical, and Action. The Yoruba film market has been a booming business since the early 1970s, with distribution shelves displaying all manner of films. However, films with relatable socio-political and economic themes that fall under the Witchcraft or supernatural genre have always been associated with the Yoruba movie industry. As pointed out by Adesanya (2000, p. 39), Hubert Ogunde's *Aiye,* started the trend in this genre and the success achieved at the box office since then has inspired film-makers to carry on with the tradition of weaving storylines along this path. Over half of films released commercially or otherwise between the 1970s and l990s fall into this category. Even films of other genres such as romance and action prominently featured scenes with witchcraft or Juju. They continue to be major or minor features despite a segment of the Yoruba film audience having an aversion for such display of supernatural or mystic acts in movie scenes. But the Yoruba audience survey conducted by Olugbenga and Ayinla (2017, p. 43) reveals the preference of the majority of respondents for films with a synthesis of traditional and modern attributes in a cultural sense. Traditional themes are often synonymous with the supernatural. Hence, their popularity with movie consumers make them commercially inviting for film-makers, and by extension, a major reason why they remain ubiquitous on modern movie shelves all over the south-west. For instance, Tunde Kelani's films are mostly replete with scenes in which Yoruba oracles, such as Ifa, are consulted or appeased for solutions to certain intractable problems bedevilling major characters in the stories. *Ti Oluwa Ni Ile* (1993), *Saworoide* (1999), *Arugba* (2010), *and Ayo Ni Mofe* (1994) are typical examples of such films. Kunle Afolayan's *Irapada* (2006) is another example. But there has been a gradual departure by a handful of Yoruba film-makers from this trend of juju films and as such, a number Yoruba films (*Iseju Kan* – 2015, *Suicide* –

2016, *Ija Iya Meji* – 2017) between the mid-2000s till date do not feature scenes with juju or witchcraft and have been well embraced and patronized at the box office.

Comedy is another popular genre with the Yorubas and there is very high patronage of films in this genre. An example is Funke Akindele's *Jenifa* (2009), which was widely accepted not just by people of Yoruba origin, but those of other tribes as well, some of whom could not understand the language, but were content with reading the subtitles. The financial success of the film motivated the production of sequels: *The Return of Jenifa* (2012), *Jenifa Goes to Jamaica* (2013), and *Jenifa's Diary* (2015 TV series). Comic relief is a norm in Yoruba films even when the genre is not outright comedy.

Historical and Epic films are also popular with audiences. Their budgets are higher than films in the other genres as a result of the large group of actors that make up the productions. Nevertheless, their box office successes are a justification for the amount of money spent on most of them. Examples of such films include *Moremi Ajasoro* (2009), *Alafin Aoole* (2011), and *Oduduwa* (2008).

Hausa-Language Films

The Hausa-Fulani people make up over 29% of the Nigerian population and are the dominant inhabitants of Northern Nigeria where Hausa is the predominant language. Kannywood, the sobriquet for the Hausa film industry was coined in 1999 by Sanusi Shehu Danaji in a new column branded: 'Kanywood' in the third edition of *Tauraruwa* magazine (Adamu 2009, pg. 2; McCain 2010). The name was derived from Kano, the capital of Kano state which is the centre of Hausa film production and distribution and the well-established Hollywood and Bollywood which the Hausa film industry aspires to be like. Ironically, the Hausa film industry which started over three decades before 1999, borrows very little from Hollywood in conceptual and structural direction. But instead, it is Hindi films of India's Bollywood that wield the greater influence on Kannywood film genres despite the religious differences that exist between the Indians whose major religion is Hinduism and the Hausas of Northern Nigeria who are chiefly Muslims. One would then wonder why the Hausas under the colonial authority of Britain would prefer films in Hindi language, which they barely understood, to English films. Larkin (2002, Pg. 323 – 325) and Adamu (2007, Pg. 77) explain that this cinematic influence started with the importation of Hindi films to Nigeria by the

Lebanese merchants who subsequently screened them in the Lebanese-controlled cinemas in Nigeria. State-controlled television stations in Northern Nigeria further reinforced the popularity of Bollywood by regularly showing Hindi films as the major attractions of weekend television. For the cinema owners and television stations, the purchase of broadcast rights for Hindi films were either overlooked or came far cheaper than Hollywood and other English language films. These films were particularly fascinating to the Hausas of Northern Nigeria who eventually developed what is arguably an obsessive followership of Bollywood. Hindi films became so popular that Hindi pamphlets and magazines such as *Stardust* became extremely widespread among the urban Hausa in Northern Nigeria and inspired the creation of *Tauraruwa* ("Star") Magazine in 1998. Another explanation falls within the purview of the general perception of the western world by the Northern Muslims as being synonymous with moral decadence and anti-Islamic lifestyle. Larkin (2003, Pg. 172) argues that,

> Indian film offers a 'third space' for Hausa audiences that mediates between the reified poles of Hausa Islamic tradition and western modernity...Indian film offers Hausa viewers a way of being modern that does not necessarily mean being western. This multifacetedness is key to their success and to their popularity. For Nigerian Hausa, Indian film offers a space that is alter to the West against which a cultural politics (but not necessarily a political one) can be waged.

Although the escapism into the 'third space' as offered by Indian film to Hausa viewers as noted by Larkin is insightful, there are other elements of Hindi film that resonate with the Hausa viewer. Adamu (2007) identifies them as those cultural similarities embedded in three major characteristics of Bollywood films. First, is Love Triangle whereby two women compete to marry a man or vice versa. Second, is Forced Marriage (particularly of girls to men other than their own love interests), and third, is the Melodramatic Songs that go side-by-side with colourful dance routines and costumes. According to A.G.D. Abdullahi (cited in Adamu 2004, p. 92) the first noticeable influence of Indian film on Hausa stories was in Umar Dembo's 1969 novel *Tauraruwa Mai Wutsiya* in which a boy and a girl sung love songs to each other in a scene within one of the chapters.

The romance with Indian films started with the purpose-built Rex Cinema in Kano for which construction application was received from a Lebanese business man by the British colonial administration in October 1937. It was the first of its kind in Kano and as the years went by, the viability of such projects quickly inspired the construction of more cinemas such as Palace Cinema and Queens Theatre, which were later followed by El Dorado, Plaza, and Orion Theatres among others. These cinemas mainly screened foreign films of which Indian films were a regular feature. However, it was not until 1955 that Hausa language film production started as an initiative of the Northern Region Authority, which used *Baban Larai* to mobilize and inform farmers about the importance of commercial farming with particular focus on cotton and groundnut productions. The films produced between then and 1989 were mostly sponsored by regional and state governments (Chamo 2012, p. 137). But the trend began to change in the mid-1980s when Hausa language TV dramas were dubbed to VHS tapes and sold illegally along with pirated Indian and American films by Marketers. The commercial viability of Hausa language dramas on video then became visible to many drama groups who had either been informally dubbing their stage plays on VHS tapes or producing content for TV. These groups were not well-paid by the TV stations and subsequently began to record dramas independent of the TV stations for sale on VHS tapes. However, it was not until march 1990 that the first commercially successful Hausa Video film *Turmin Danya* was released. It was written by Aminu Hassan Yakasai, directed by Salisu Galadanci, and produced by Kano-based Tumbin Giwa Drama Group. The commercial success of the film inspired the group to produce other successful video films in quick succession. The 1991 film *Rikicin Duniya* and 1992 *Gimbiya Fatima* were also very successful (Adamu 2009, p. 1; Chamo 2012, p. 137; McCain 2012, Adamu 2013, p. 2). *Turmin Danya* is widely referred to as the catalyst for the resurgent Hausa video film industry known as Kannywood and the leading brains behind it, Aminu Hassan Yakasai, Salisu Galadanci and Bashir Mudi Yakasai who have been collectively credited with birthing the concept of the Hausa film industry, were to some extent influenced by the Southern Nigerian Yoruba video films. Adamu (2013, Pg. 2) reveals that the new medium of Yoruba video films were already screening regularly in places that included the Paradise Hotel conference hall in Kano in the mid-1980s and the trio were visitors to such screening venues. The idea of residents of Northern Nigeria, particularly Kano, visiting such venues to watch Yoruba language video films coupled with armature Hausa TV dramas that were being

screened in various video parlours by Sani Lamma and Hamisu Gurgu suggested to them that the production of Hausa language video film could well be commercially viable. The industry has grown remarkably since the era of video cameras began in the 1980s. Production volume skyrocketed following the commercial success of *Turmin Danya,* which drew attention to the propensity of good financial returns to investors in Hausa language films. And by 2012, Kano State Filmmakers Association had over 2000 production companies registered with it (Daily Mail 2016).

The stories of the majority of films in the early days of Kannywood grew out of what is known as Kano Market Literature or the Hausa Popular Literature which were built around dialogue and action and made easy transition to TV possible. The result of this transition is that most of the stories in the TV dramas and films of 1980s and 1990s were adaptations of Hausa Popular Literature following the precedence set in 1976 by *Shehu Umar*, and later, *Ruwan Bagaja* in 1989. Both films were adaptations of same titled novels that were among the first five Hausa novels to be published in 1935 under the auspices of the Translation Bureau. Their publication was subsequent upon selection as two of the top five Hausa stories in a literary competition organized by the British Administration in 1933 (Furniss 1998, p. 11; Adamu 2013, p. 1). Production activities blossomed from 1990 onwards until Engineer Rabiu Musa Kwakwanso assumed office as Governor of Kano state in 1999 and banned film-making activities in December 2000 because it was considered offensive to Islam and the Hausa culture. The ban followed the introduction of the sharia law in Kano state in June 2000 and included proscription of production, exhibition, and sale of films, which marked the beginning of major challenges that entangled the industry on religious basis. The ban was later lifted when the Motion Pictures Practitioners Association of Nigeria (MOPPAN) intervened and convinced the governor that the industry employed about 5000 people in the state. Politics was also an important factor in the governor's concession to the plea as practitioners threatened to support opposition candidate in the forth-coming 2003 governorship election. Stricter regulations aimed at preventing the erosion of the value system of Islam and the Hausa culture was consequently introduced through a Review Board initiated by film practitioners themselves in order to steer productions away from further conflict with the sharia law. The governor went further to establish the Kano State Censorship Board (KSCB).

There was relative peace thereafter, until a private eight minute mobile phone sex clip involving actress, Maryam Hiyana Usman and her boyfriend, Usman Bobo was

illicitly released and went viral in August 2007 (McCain 2011; Anike 2012). It was regarded as the first Hausa Blue film and a taboo to the Hausa value system, prompting the incumbent governor, Malam Ibrahim Shekarau to restructure the Censors Board. He appointed former deputy head of shari'a police, Hisbah, Malam Abubakar Rabo Abdulkareem, as the new Director General. Thousands of optical discs of Hausa films were seized from producers and distributors and burnt along with Kano Market Literatures known in Hausa language as Littattafan Soyayya (books of love) for their perceived promotion of immorality. Abdulkareem's hard-line approach to sanitizing the industry further led to thousands of arrests between 2007 and 2011 for what was termed as film-makers' abuse of the Hausa-Fulani culture. Prominent among the arrested industry practitioners were Malam Aliyu Abdullahi Gora, editor of Fim Magazine, the leading Hausa entertainment magazine, actors Adam A. Zango, Rabiu Musa, Hamisu Lamid'o Iyana-Tama, Bashir D'andago, and Aminu Ala. The arrests and new censorship rules including the submission of scripts to the Censorship Board for vetting and approval before production, prompted several Kano-based film-makers to relocate to places such as Kaduna, Abuja, and Jos that already had established film-making structures similar to that of Kano.

Reprieve came to the industry in 2011 with the re-election of Rabiu Musa Kwakwanso as Governor of Kano state. He restructured the KSCB and re-appointed a new D.G. whose approach to creating sanity in the industry was softer whilst retaining checks and balances on the industry.

Igbo Language Films

The Igbos (sometime referred to as Ibo) are from the southeast region of Nigeria and the third largest ethnic group in the country, making up about 17% of the population. Although the 5 core Igbo states that make up the southeast part of Nigeria are Abia, Anambra, Imo, Ebonyi, and Enugu, but Igbo speaking tribes and communities can be found in other states within the south-south region in Delta (Agbor, Asaba), Rivers and Edo state (Igbanke).

Amadi, a 1975 Igbo-language film with English subtitles is the first Nigerian film that was shot in an indigenous language. It was produced by Ola Balogun's production company, Afrocult Foundation Limited, with the support of the Eastern Central State Government. Ola Balogun is a Yoruba man who was born in Aba in 1945

and fluent in the Igbo language as he is with the Yoruba language. There was no Igbo-language film of note after *Amadi* until 1992 when *Living in Bondage* was released. The reason for this is that Eddie Ugbomah, who was appointed Chairman of the Nigerian Film Corporation in 1989, was the only film-maker of Igbo extraction in the Nigerian film industry for almost two decades after the release of *Amadi* and he did not make any Igbo-language film during this period. His debut film *The Rise and Fall of Dr Oyenusi* was an English-language film that was released in 1985 and he has made more than 12 films on celluloid altogether. Like Ola Balogun, he is fluent in both Igbo and Yoruba languages mainly because he is a native of Aboh in Ndokwa East Local Government of Delta State, but educated in Lagos state where he grew up. The majority of his films are in English language, and 3 are in Yoruba language (*Apalara* – 1986, *Omiran* -1986, *and Tori Ade* – 1989).The Igbos are known to be industrious. But their investment priorities are usually targeted at clearly profitable ventures and Igbo-language films did not seem to fall into this category. Hence, there was no investment in this line of business until Kenneth Nnebue ventured in with *Living in Bondage* in 1992. As noted in the chapter on *History of Nollywood*, Nnebue, like Ugbomah, had invested in Yoruba films prior to making his first Igbo-language film. The commercial success of the film did not only give a boost to the otherwise docile film industry in Nigeria, which instantly became busy with productions, but led to a hoard of Igbo-language film productions as had never been seen in Nigeria. Films such as *Nneka the Pretty Serpent, Circle of Doom,* and *Rattle snake* (parts 1,2, and 3) among others were all commercially successful and gave indications that Igbo language films have come to stay. Following the trend that was set by *Living in Bondage*, they all had English subtitles and were released straight to VHS tapes for commercial consumption. Although most of them were shot in Lagos state in the early stages, but they were loved and enthusiastically embraced by people of Igbo extraction all over the country and in the diaspora.

Director of Publicity of the Association of Nollywood Core Producers [ANCOP], Harris Chuma (cited in Ojiego 2011) observed that Igbo language films began to disappear from movie shelves in 1998 consequent on the impression that they were no longer viable, and by the first quarter of the 2000s, Igbo language films had become extinct. Despite the glee of success that followed the release of many Igbo-language films in the 1990s, there was a gradual shift from the local language films to English language films by the same Igbo marketers and distributors who made their

own language films fashionable in the first place. Kenneth Nnebue, again, was a pacesetter, producing *Glamour Girls* 1 and 2 in 1994 and 1996 respectively, and then *Rituals* in 1997. Both films were commercial successes that surpassed all Igbo films in the market at the times of release. The commercial feat achieved by Nnebue again seemed to suggest that Igbo-language films were no longer as appealing to the audience as English-language films. And so, by the mid-2000s there was a dearth of Igbo-language films in circulation. Amayo Uzo Philip is one of the most prolific Nigerian film-makers with over 300 Nollywood films to his credit both as a director and as a producer. He has made 10 Igbo-language films (*Ofor na ogu* – 2002, *Nothing spoil, Odum na akwa eke, Odum na Ogbuagu, Ikenna, Ije omimi ikenna, Ezi nwanyi di uko, Onyiri onwu, Asiri ogbako*, and *Uteri nduzi*), which also makes him one of the most prolific Igbo-language film-makers till date. In response to my research questions on what was responsible for the extinction of Igbo-language films, he explained that the marketers, who were the backbone of Nollywood at the time, lost interest in the market potentials of the Igbo-language films and preferred to invest more in English-language films which had proven to be more profitable. The patronage of the Igbo-language films at this time was considered narrow and significantly low in comparison to English and Yoruba language films. Low patronage in this instance does not equate to loss of money invested, but lower than expected profit margins. English language films sold far more copies of VHS and CDs and every marketer wanted maximum profit on their investment. The producers were in the business to make profit and had no interest in the development or sustenance of the Igbo-language film industry. The Igbo population in Nigeria is relatively small when compared to Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani populations and this has been put forward by many film-makers as a major reason why the films are no longer as popular as they once were. But this argument is weak given that there has been little or no difference in the population percentage and demographics of the Igbo-speaking tribes in Nigeria between the early 1990s and now when compared with the other major tribes. What changed is the perception of the financiers. Yet, it was not every film-maker that gave up on the viability of Igbo-Language films. A very tiny percentage (less than 5%) of film-makers from the eastern part of Nigeria continued to make Igbo-language films. Many others who were interested in making films in their indigenous language were constrained by lack of finance, and some of those who had the required funds did not have the confidence to plough their monies into Igbo-language films. Philips asserts that Funding is the bane of Igbo-language films – a

problem he has since been keen on bringing to the fore and for which he has continued to commit his time and energy to addressing.

In the early 2000s while it was common to see Yoruba and Hausa film producers smiling to the banks and their films screened in movie theatres or broadcast on TV, there was a gaping hole in the space that was once occupied in Nollywood by the third largest ethnic group in Nigeria. It seemed the Igbos did not care much about seeing films in their own language, as the majority of them continued to watch English-language films. Even Yoruba-language films occasionally sufficed. The dearth of Igbo-language films did not in any way affect the business in the Onitsha and Aba film markets in Abia and Anambra states in the southeast, which till date remain two of the largest Nigerian movie markets, especially for optical discs sales. Igbo film-makers continued to produce films in large quantities, particularly in English language, and these markets continued to boom.

The scarcity of Igbo-language films became noticeable when DSTV opened the Africa magic channel in 2003 and then dedicated slots for local language films. The few Igbo films that were available for broadcast continued to be re-broadcast and subsequently became monotonous for the viewers. Nevertheless, not many questions were asked until the huge success of the Africa Movie Channel initiative prompted the station to create two 12/7 channels dedicated solely to Hausa-language and Yoruba-language films on Channels 117 and 118 respectively on march 1, 2010 (now on channels 156 and 157 respectively). There was no such channel solely dedicated to Igbo-language films in the offing. It was then that the dearth of Igbo-language films became glaring. This impelled Igbos, who also make-up a sizeable number of DSTV subscribers in Nigeria to start asking why there were no new films in their language. Prior to the opening of the Yoruba and Hausa-language films channels, a group of Igbo film-makers led by Uzo Amayo Philips established the Omenigbo Cultural Association in Nollywood on the 6th of February, 2007. It was aimed at reviving and encouraging the production of Igbo-language films and by extension, the Igbo language, which is believed to be going into extinction. Thus, at inception, the group started a very strong awareness campaign that was targeted at using the medium of film and TV for the preservation of the Igbo-language, which according to UNESCO (cited in Ani 2012) could become extinct by 2025. Philips is assertive that it was the sensitization carried out by the association that led to the gradual revival of Igbo-language films in the last quarter of the 2000s. There is renewed interest among Igbo film-makers to produce

films in their own language and a handful of them have been made since then. DSTV recently set funds aside for collaborations with producers to make Igbo-language films. This gesture attracted a lot of independent film producers who began to make Igbo-language films either in partnership with DSTV or entirely on their own, with the confidence that DSTV will purchase the broadcast rights for the films. The renewed interest is not confined to producers from the southeast as film-makers from other parts of the country now see prospects in Igbo-language productions. An example is Charles Novia who is from Edo state in the south-south region. He premiered an Igbo-language television series *Nduka* on DSTV in 2015. DSTV now has enough content in its archives and as a result, the 24/7 Igbo-language channel known as Africa Magic Igbo, channel 159, began broadcast operation on April 2, 2015. Nonetheless, despite the increasing number of film productions and DSTV's efforts, Igbo films remain in the doldrums in comparison to the ever-present Yoruba and Hausa films. But then, Philips remains optimistic about the future of Igbo language films and reveals that there is also a proportionate increase in the patronage of Igbo-language films, particularly by Igbos across the globe. His optimism is partly based on the outcome of the release of two versions of *Odum Na Akwaeke* in English language and Igbo-language respectively. The English language version performed poorly on commercial shelves, while the Igbo-language version received very high patronage and continues to sell to date.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored the history of the Nigerian film industry with the intent of giving clearer insights into the origin and decline of cinema films in Nigeria. It has also enabled an understanding of the melodramatic trends of most films made in the country, as well as the influences that birthed the language film industry, which as I asserted earlier, is as vibrant as English language films. These insights will therefore enable a more lucid understanding of the industrial structure of Nollywood which will be discussed and analysed in detail in subsequent chapters. That is in view of the fact that many scholars and industry observers have often been bewildered at the foray of Nollywood across the globe. But then, discussing the structure and economics of film distribution in isolation of genres is unusual and unproductive given the valuable impacts of genre on film reception in Nigeria. Hence, the next chapter will delve into

the cultural significance of films and its symbiosis with genre and other filmic elements towards audience reception. The objective is to further clarify the diversity inherent in the films and the value of cultural identity and influences on audience reception across Africa and the diaspora.

4. NOLLYWOOD FILM GENRES

INTRODUCTION

The significance of genre in the choice of a film script is one that cannot be overemphasized, particularly when probing the economics of film-making in Nollywood. For the typical optical disc marketer-producer, scripting ideas are usually not simply intuitive, but carefully thought-out and crafted for profitability. The same goes for the cinema-focused film producer. Movie scripts are entrenched in genres that reflect perceived societal moods and cravings, which in the long run guaranties good audience patronage of the film. Jonathan Haynes notes the vital role of genre in audiences' initial reactions to Nollywood films:

> Genre is the most important structure guiding a potential buyer through the stack of the week's new releases, even more important than the faces of the actors on the film's jacket or the names of the director and marketing company. Nollywood films are essentially generic; they cannot afford not to be, both in the sense that a film that does not clearly signal its nature will get lost in the market and that individualizing a film takes both time and money, complicating a system that works fast because everybody already knows what to do. (Haynes 2011, Pg. 74)

Therefore, the relationship between film genre and marketing is symbiotic and extremely very important to the final sale and distribution process. I know this for sure given my active participation in the production of films that transcend various Nollywood genres. My field experiences since 1997 starting with my minor acting role and crew position in Francis Agu's *In the Name of The Father*, a gospel themed social commentary film to various romance, action-thriller, comedy and numerous genres of films produced by the prolific Emem Isong – not to mention my own films from 1998 to date – have widened my scope of understanding of the motivation behind genres choices. More so, my interactions with various film marketers and distributors including Petel Foundations, Lucky Geo, Remmy Jes, Royal Arts Academy, Irokotv, and DSTV along diverse categories of films through the years has aided my

understanding of their mindsets in genre adoptions at various times as will be elucidated in the sequence of this discourse.

Ayakoroma (2014, Pg. 32) refers to 1970–1985 as the "Glorious Years of Cinema Industry in Nigeria". There were several Movie Theatres spread all over the country during this period that the oil boom blossomed the Nigerian economy and audiences – mainly in Western Nigeria – eagerly trooped to the cinemas to see these films before the decline in patronage set in in the years following 1985. However, the current activities in the Nigerian movie theatre space since 2014 is pointing towards even more glorious years ahead despite the economic recession currently grappling the nation. And genre plays an important role in box office records that started breaking with the release of *30 Days in Atlanta* in the same year. Since then, the three highest grossing films in the history of cinema in Nigeria are classified within the same genre. But then, what is most apt about Nigerian film genres is Becker's inference to the relevance of the Africanness of Nollywood films to the African audience. She observes that:

> Nollywood has become a major source of African identification in post-colonies such as South Africa and Namibia. The consumption of Nigerian video films provides young highly educated, cosmopolitan men and women in Cape Town and Windhoek, with the opportunity to claim, reinvent, and reclaim their Africanity, thus imagining a contemporary brand of Afromodernity on screen" (Becker 2013, p. 193).

Similarly, in reference to Becker's observation, Harrow (2017, p. 224) surmises that Nollywood "genres are grounded in experiences and aspirations familiar to the Nigerian audiences, in contrast to mainstream Hollywood films".

Although *Kongi's Harvest*, which I identify as the first Nollywood film, was a political drama, the industry has in recent times produced films of diverse genres that are dominated by melodrama, retaining the central place it has occupied right from the inception of the industry in 1992. It is not surprising, as Nollywood films have had what is referred to in Pidgin English as 'follow-follow', which translates to a copycat approach to film-making (Haynes 2007, p. 23). The motivation behind digital film-making is unashamedly pecuniary and every producer takes a cue from the successes of the time.

Living in Bondage is a film that portrays witchcraft or Black magic (widely known as Juju in West Africa) employed by impoverished characters struggling to get rich, and the ensuing repercussion of the evil they perpetuated in the process. It shows recognisable elements of everyday life such as the rich flaunting their wealth to the admiration, envy, or jealousy of others; the desperation of the poor in a society that is bereft of social welfare benefits; a partly traditional society in which religious syncretism is loosely at play and the potency or otherwise of rituals, witchcraft, and voodoo in this deeply religious society. While the story employed popular melodramatic conventions with exaggerated characters and actions, and music that expressed heightened states of emotion, it was also familiar to Nigerian audiences and appealed to their emotions. What made *Living in Bondage* commercially viable was the use of the video format to convey in a fascinating way, a sensational story that people could empathise with. More important and novel was the producers' pre-conceived commercial and marketing strategy that included the adoption of the existing network that was used to distribute electronic goods in wholesale quantities across West Africa, and ultimately, made the availability of the film widespread. Yet, every film-maker that was jolted into the business by the success it recorded decided to copy the process. Almost every film that followed was about rituals, witchcraft, money, and some form of special effects that always managed to excite the audience.

Notwithstanding the earlier ascendancy of the witchcraft–Horror films such as *Nneka the Pretty Serpent* (1992), *Blood Money* (1997), and *Rituals* (1997), Nollywood films fall into diverse genres that have managed to capture the attention of audiences who had become disgruntled with the Juju and ritual dominated themes. Another convention (with few exceptions) that Nollywood struggles with is the stereotypical, stock-character traits that some actors carry from one production to the other. Examples are *Ukwa* and *Osuofia* portrayed by Nkem Owoh, *Mr Ibu* by John Okafor, and *Okon* by Ime Bishop Umoh. These are hyperbolic comic characters whose personality traits reoccur in many films, particularly in the comedy genre, as a result of the commercial success of the film that that characterization originated from. Mercy Johnson portrayed characteristics of a Tomboy in a number of films including *Native Fowl 1 & 2, and Heart of a Fighter*. The box office success of Funke Akindele's *Jennifer* prompted many producers to cast her in other roles that are similar to the illiterate village girl that arrives in the city and speaks bad English in a humorous way. The most prominent of such films is *A Trip to Jamaica* (2016).

Some producers departed from this convention by attempting to balance the themes and genres that their companies created. This diversity of film genres is partly responsible for the continued growth of Nollywood. The Nigerian clime and polity is diverse and enables a miscellany of film genres in ways that could be collectively acceptable, appealing, and sometimes, elicit a healthy national discourse that embraces negating views. Romance, Gospel, Action, Thrillers, Historical, Folklore, Musical, and Documentary are some of the other popular genres in Nollywood. But then, many Nigerian films mostly embrace dual or multiple genres despite the dominance, usually, of a particular genre over the others within an individual film. Such practices are in conformity with Abercrombie's (1996, Pg. 45) suggestion that "the boundaries between genres are shifting and becoming more permeable" universally. He suggests further that there is "a steady dismantling of genre" in modern television (and in film, if I may add), to which Chandler (1997, Pg. 3) inferred could "be attributed in part to economic pressure to pursue new audiences". Similarly, for Nollywood, the employment of multiple genres is usually deliberate, with a view to capturing a wider audience. Romantic comedies are mostly integrated with Gospel, Action, and other genres for economic reasons and sometimes purely for artistic purposes. *Rumours, Uyai, October 1,* and *Confusion Na Wa* are examples of films with serious political, social and economic themes within various genres that have comedy ingrained. Therefore, Nollywood films are sometimes difficult to define specifically as a particular genre, which is in tandem with chandler's argument, in his analysis of genre, that,

> It is difficult to make clear cut distinction between one genre and another: genres overlap, and there are 'mixed genres' (such as comedy-thriller). Specific genres tend to be easy to identify intuitively, but difficult (not impossible) to define. Particular features which are characteristic of a genre are not normally unique to it; it is their relative prominence, combination, and functions which are distinctive (Chandler 1997, Pg. 2)

Therefore, the analysis, and even discourse of Nollywood film genres should put into perspective the difficulty presented by the multiplicity of genre inherent within individual films. Howbeit, an understanding of the influence of pecuniary motives in the film-maker's choice of genre(s) makes it less difficult to understand the place of

sub-genre(s) within the major genre of a film or that of each genre in a dual or multiple genre film.

Abercrombie (1996, Pg. 43) notes further that "genres permit the creation and maintenance of a loyal audience which becomes used to seeing programmes within a genre". Such is the loyalty of Nollywood audiences to certain film genres that appeal to them. Film-makers are always quick to exploit such perceived loyalty and that has led to a lot of similarity between the formulas adopted by producers from one genre to the other and from one film to another because of the copycat pattern of the industry. A classic example is the series of Epic films that followed the commercial success of Andy Amenechi and Don-Pedro Obaseki's *Igodo* between 1999 and the first quarter of 2000s. These films include *Ijele* (1999), *Ojadike* (2000), *Ebube* (2002), and *Eye of the Gods* (2002). Similarly, there was a trend of vigilante films that followed Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen's *Issakaba* in the first quarter of the 2000s. Moreover, there was a recycling of some major actors with very little to distinguish between the characters they played in one film to those played in others. In *Igodo,* Sam Dede was Egbuna, the hunter and leader of the seven young men chosen to go on a perilous mission to find the knife that lies in the hills of the mysterious and precarious Amadioha forest on behalf of their village, Umuoka. The knife was a significant solution to eradicating the plague that had befallen the community. In like manner, Sam Dede was Ijele in the self-titled film *Ijele* in which he was also a courageous hunter and symbol of sacrificial leadership. He had to go into the mysterious and perilous Forest of the Ancestors to find Ijikara leaf, the panacea for the cryptic fatal sickness of dying Oma, his adopted sister's daughter. Despite the difference in the storylines of these films and others, there were lots of similarities in the plotlines and other symbolic patterns. These similarities are not limited to Epic films. In *Ashes,* a sequel to *Ashes to Ashes,* Sam Dede played the dual role of Ejima, a criminal, and Ubaka, the fearless good commander of the vigilante group known as Baka Boys. There was little to distinguish Ubaka from Ebube, his role as the intrepid leader of the vigilante group called Issakaba in the self-titled film *Issakaba* which was earlier released in 2000 by Kas-Vid International Limited and Mosco. In the same fashion, the late Justus Esiri's role as the malevolent Prophet (Ejima Jesus) in *Ashes to Ashes* and its sequels is akin to his role as Igbakigba the Spiritualist in Moviemates Industry Ltd 2009 production *Time Up.*

While there are novel ideas from the artistic to technical direction of films on steady basis, the reason for the similarities noted above is that most marketers often put

pressure on writers and directors to come up with screenplays and film directions that are akin to a film that had just achieved a high commercial success. The ideology behind such is the presupposition that the commercial success of the film indicates that the style, elements, or genre it embodies are what audiences are currently interested in. Hence, different scripts with different character names, but similar storylines, and sometimes, very predictable plots are a summary of the larger percentage of Nollywood films. It is at editing that the differences abound with various cuts and transitions between scenes, creating fast, medium or slow paced films. There are films that must be fast-paced in order to fit properly into a particular genre, while others require mid-paced inter-cut between frames and scenes.

An important point to note is that a lot has changed in Nollywood since the entrant of modern cinema exhibition which was trail blazed by Siverbird Cinemas in May 2004. The industry is now divided into two distinct production categories that have direct impact on film genres and overall technical quality of a film. They are the Cinema Films and the Direct-to-Optical Disc Films. The first category of films are conceived and made specifically to premiere in cinemas. These films are remarkably different because of the technical depth and originality required to appeal to the more sophisticated and critical cinema audience. Originality in this instance includes creativity within the adopted genre to avoid the imitations that are rife in Nollywood films as earlier noted. But then, Cinema Films are less than 5% of Nollywood films which include *30 Days in Atlanta* (2013), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2013), *October 1* (2015), *Fifty* (2015), and *A Trip to Jamaica* (2016). Direct-to-Optical Disc Films make up over 75% of Nollywood films. The production hubs of these films are mainly in Lagos, Asaba, Enugu, Onitsha, and the Kannywood enclave of Kano. Films emanating from these places do not bother with cinema and fit the description of the typical Nollywood films described in most part of this genre overview. However, there are always pockets of individual directors that come up with innovations that redefine the direction of the industry regardless of the channel of distribution. The entrant of Irokotv and other online streaming sites have also created a new category of film-makers whose choice of film genres and storytelling approach is influenced by neither cinema nor optical disc releases, but by online and television distribution platforms only. Such film-makers are on the steady rise and are very creative. Moreover, more producers now make use of camera accessories and grips such as sliders, car mounts, tracks and dollies

that enable smooth camera movement and add finesse to film narrative – thanks to the availability of more portable and cheaper models of such equipment.

Carolyn Miller (1984, p. 163) argues that "the number of genres current in any society is indeterminate and depends upon the complexity and diversity of the society". Nigeria is very complex and diverse due to the differences that abound in the glut of language/dialect, ethnicity, and culture, and so is the film industry which is a microcosm, and arguably, 'mirror' of the society. Although the dominant film genres in Nollywood include Romance, Comedy, Action, Thriller, Gospel, Traditional, and Epic, but the diversity inherent in Nollywood itself means it harbours other less prominent genres that have received very little attention from film-makers for various reasons that include lack of finance and a dearth of the technical knowledge required for such genres. An example are films that incorporate plots and iconography highlighting technology that is advanced beyond what the human race has today. This can be an expensive genre, and so, very few attempts have been made at science fiction films in Nollywood. One of the first is Jeta Amata's 1998 film, *Alien Attack*, which was poorly done and ended up as a commercial failure. At an interview with PM News, Amata (2013) jokingly described it as 'the worst film that has ever appeared in the Nigerian market'. It was an ambitious attempt that was wrongly timed, given that the Nigerian film industry at that time lacked the resources for this genre. The availability of cheaper cameras, effects-heavy digital editing equipment and online tutorials on YouTube and other social media networks have enabled more Nigerian film-makers to employ VFX better. But there is yet to be a very well made Science Fiction film with good audience reception in Nigeria. The closest to achieving this feat is the futuristic Sci-Fi, *Kajola*, the story of love and lust directed by Niyi Akinmolayan, which premiered at the Silverbird Cinema, Abuja among others on July 30, 2010. It was the most expensive Nigerian film as at 2010 and remains one of the most expensive to date with a budget over 130 million naira (about US$800,000). It is Nollywood's first Computer Generated Images (CGI) film. According to Akinmolayan (Akinmolayan 2016; Naijarules.com 2010; Nigeria films.com 2010) 70% of the shots involved VFX work that took over 13 months to complete. The story is partly an adaptation of Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* and focuses on Nigeria, which had become a totalitarian state after a second civil war (the Nigerian civil war was between 1967 and 1970) in the year 2059 and the division between poor people from the war-torn Lagos mainland and the rich, who have migrated to a new ultra-modern city on Lagos Island. The thrust

of the story is that the segregation and the wide gap that exists between rich and poor, as it exists in the present, poses a threat to the nation in the future. A rebel, Allen (played by Adonija Owiriwa) leads an insurgence dubbed 'Kajola' against the Nigerian government, but he is confronted by the female police chief, Yetunde (played by Keira Hewatch), who aims to stop the insaurrection. It was shot in Lagos, but post production was in Port Harcourt, Rivers state. It is also the first recognisable science fiction film made in the south-south region of Nigeria. Although its application of special effects is an improvement on what was done in earlier films and audiences trooped to the cinemas with great expectations after seeing the trailer, but they were disappointed. The screening lasted only two days due to audience complaints about the poor technical quality, which compelled theatres to abruptly pull the plug on the film by August 2, 2010.

Aside from cost, Nollywood producers have avoided this genre because it is usually very time-consuming. The technicalities of special effects in post-production and the care required to make them believable are responsible for the prolonged editing time. The more time that is spent on a film means more money will be spent on studio costs and editing fees, which is at variance with the low-cost and high volume nature of the industry. Producers are usually very eager to make quick returns on their investments. Thus, the dominant genres in Nollywood are those with far more prospects of quick and guaranteed financial returns. Each of them is inspired by different socio-economic, political, and historical factors. These factors and their relevance to audience reception and broader Nollywood identity will now be analysed in detail to establish a better understanding of the global attention that the industry has attracted.

ROMANCE FILMS

The Romance genre is one of the oldest genres of Nollywood films and one of the most popular. Films within the romance genre are usually mid-paced and incorporate the use of very good-looking actors, especially for the major roles. Handsome and beautiful cast members are usually an attraction to the audience and as such, the male and female protagonists usually represent the ideal physical features of a likeable couple. Its resonance with audiences is a continuation of the culture of some of the popular

television dramas of the past, such as those that ran on the network service of the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) between the 1980s and 1990s. The most famous of them include *Mirror in the Sun*, which was created and produced by Lola Fani-Kayode and aired between 1984 and 1986, Zeb Ejiro's *Ripples* (1988 – 1993), Amaka Isaac-Ene's (later known as Amaka Igwe) *Checkmate* (April 1991 to 1995), and *Mega Fortunes* another series by Zeb Ejiro (1993 – 1994). Many of the producers and directors of these television series went on to make films. After *checkmate* Amaka Igwe directed a number of films including the romantic drama film *Violated*, which was released in 1996 with over 150 thousand copies of DVD sold. The versatile producer, Emem Isong became known particularly for her romance flavoured films such as *Breaking Point* (1996), *Hit and Run* (1999), *Games Women Play* (2005), and *Games Men Play* (2006). Vivian Ejike, Omoni Oboli, and Uche Jombo are now among the producers who feature romance as their preferred genre.

This genre deals with multiple themes that are dramatically structured to entertain and sometimes educate people about prevalent societal issues as was the case with *Mortal Inheritance* (1996), *Silent Scandal* (2010), and several others with diverse themes that include subjects of sickle cell anaemia in relationships, cheating spouses, social class division and struggle, the dilemma of HIV positive persons in relationships, and many other subject-matters. It is however often intertwined with other genres. For instance, *Living in Bondage* remotely mixes romance with elements of the supernatural. It primarily falls under the Voodoo or Juju and witchcraft-horror genre, but partly falls into the categories of gospel and romance genres – as revealed in Andy's relationship with his loving wife, Merit, before he was cajoled into killing her. She rebuffed immoral advances from lecherous men including her boss, Ichie Million despite Andy's poor financial state. *Untouchable* (1998) also falls into this category of Romans/Gospel/Juju films, even though it differs slightly from *Living in Bondage* with a central theme that deals with Schizophrenia. Another example of romantic films that fall into other genres is Desmond Elliot's *Knocking on Heaven's Door* (2014), which is a Gospel musical film about a jealous and abusive husband whose long-suffering wife eventually falls in love with a music producer and gets separated from her husband.

These categories of films cut across English and other Nigerian language films. They are particularly ubiquitous in the Yoruba-language films including *Paramo* (2013), *Mayawa* (2013), *Ife mi* (2015), and *Idakeji Ife* (2016) and Igbo-Language films such as *Odum Na Akwa Eke* (2009) and *Nnem Onye Olu* (2013) of which amorous

scenes – such as visible in *Fifty* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* – are tolerated. But the same is not applicable to Hausa-language productions of which romance-themed films are delicate topics because of the predominantly Islamic religious beliefs of the majority of Northern Nigeria where the films are made. Though, romance is arguably the dominant Hausa film genre, but often crafted with such extreme caution that sometimes conflict with the creative licence of the film-maker. The sharia law is applicable in many localities of the majority of the states and actors have been punished for playing roles perceived to be "immoral" even when it is a mere peck on the cheek. A recent example of such extreme intolerance is the ban imposed on popular actress Rahama Sadau by Motion Pictures Practitioners Association of Nigeria (MOPPAN) for hugging and holding hands with the vocalist in ClassiQ's music Video, *I Love You,* in 2016. Although there was no kissing, pecking, or serious cuddling throughout the musical video, but the ban was upheld despite the objections raised by film-makers and various organizations across Nigeria for what MOPPAN, the Hausa film regulating body, described as a violation of professional ethics. Besides MOPPAN, there is also the Islamic Policing Agency known as Hisbah, which is famous in Kano state for monitoring moral standard of films. These authoritarian regulations are due to the influence that films have on audiences and the perception that romance plots can form the basis for more intense local commentary and pleasures for the audience. The Islamic authorities are of the view that such pleasures could have negative impacts on religious and moral standards. But such severe regulations have restricted the level of creativity and number of films within this genre in Kannywood.

In contrast to the authoritarian regulation of films in the North, governments of other regions of Nigeria are liberal and tolerant of intimacy in films. Thus, Romance remains one of the most financially rewarding film genres in cinemas and on optical discs. Its popularity stems from the similarity it shares with soap operas and popular North American telenovelas such as *The Rich also Cry, Maria De Los Angeles, The Gardener's Daughter, Second Chance, No One But You,* and *When You are Mine* that ran on Nigerian television network services between the 1980s and 1990s. Nigerian television viewers had become accustomed to these telenovelas before the proliferation of Nollywood films. While Nollywood films have benefited economically from the adoption of the telenovela style of production, they are now gradually departing from this soap opera style of films. Mildred Okwo's political and cultural drama, *The Meeting* (2012), is a good example of such departure. Though, it is somewhat

melodramatic with some fascinating stereotype characters, but the music is not as interspersed and elaborate as noticeable in the films of the 1990s and 2000s such as *Living in Bondage*. The camera narrative is as impressive as the oral narrative provided by the actors, making it one of the most successful films in Nigerian cinema in 2012. Its exhibition of various cultural nuances and attires of a handful of Nigerian tribes (Yoruba, Ibo, Hausa, Urhobo, and Edo) makes it endearing to people of various cultural backgrounds. The spoken language of the film is English, but inflections of the Pidgin English and local Nigerian languages are constant throughout the film and created a connection with the audience. The romantic twists between Makinde Esho, a Yoruba widower and Ejira, a far younger Urhobo girl who is on national youth service assignment in Abuja, creates a familiar but not very usual true love relationship that breaks the barrier that a wide age difference usually presents. The familiar themes of nepotism, favouritism, tribalism, bribery, and inter-cultural relationship are experienced daily by many Nigerians and Africans and these were highlighted in a way that created an empathy with the characters and enables an easy decoding of the messages that were channelled through both verbal and body languages.

As at December 2016, another Romance film, *Fifty* had a domestic gross box office revenue of 94 million naira (approximately US$300,000) to become the second highest grossing film in Nigerian box office history. The story reveals the scandalous lives of four career-driven women (Maria, Tola, Elizabeth, and Kate) at their pinnacle. Relationally, they all have problems to grapple with. The Reality TV star, Tola, was raped by her father as a teenager, with the invidious act leaving a sour taste in her relationship with her Attorney husband, Kunle, and threatens her marriage despite his being unaware of it. Her mother is aware of this incestuous act, but is keen to make it a family secret to avoid the shame that could plague the family as a result. But Tola remains entangled by it despite her career success and marriage. Three of her friends are equally embroiled in their own complications. Maria, is gifted with unwanted pregnancy resulting from an affair with a married man whom she is not interested in getting married to. The renowned Obstetrician, Elizabeth's affinity with younger men has created a strained relationship with her daughter. And Kate, who has been diagnosed with breast cancer takes solace in the church and becomes somewhat obsessed with religion. The boundaries were pushed to an extent with explicit sex. Very few Nigerian films have been that explicit and another film by the director, Biyi Bandele, *Half of a Yellow Sun* is one of them. But that did not deter the audience from

the cinemas and the film, which premiered at the London Film Festival on October 17, 2015 has since grossed over 400 million naira (Approximately US$1.5 million) through various revenue streams (Izuzu 2016). Such is the premium responsiveness that Nigerian audiences place on well-made Romance films.

COMEDY FILMS

Well-researched and produced comedy films remain the most appreciated by Nollywood audiences who love to have a good laugh to ease the stress of the harsh economic and environmental condition that is experienced throughout the country. Some of the most famous Nollywood stars such as Nkem Owoh, John Okafor, and Babatunde Omidina (AKA Baba Suwe) specialize in the comedy genre; likewise the diminutive Chinedu Ikedieze and Osita Iheme, both of whom boarded the same flight with me to South Africa in 2010 and literally brought the Johannesburg airport to a standstill, as fans (including airport staff) took turns for their autographs and posed for photographs with them; such is the popularity of the comedy genre and the actors that are associated with it.

They are mostly slapstick and generally hyperbolic, which is not farfetched from the popular TV comedies of the 1970s to 1990s such as *The Masquerade (later called the New Masquerade), Basi and Company, The Village Headmaster*, *Samanja* and *Second Chance*. Some of these TV comedies lampooned the modern Nigerian society in many ways, with styles that were unique to each series. Notable is the Get-Rich-Quick mentality of some Nigerians as personified by the conman, Basi, the lead character in *Basi and Company* and his novice protégé, Alali, both of who constantly schemed to make quick wealth without taking up decent jobs. Their ploys always backfired on them at the end of each series. The series, like many others, were satirical and often taught morals that encouraged every individual to be responsible parts of their communities. This remains the major attribute of Nollywood film genres today, which Orlando (2017, p. 3 & 4) perceives to be within the purview of African films aimed at "socio-political critique" and "social-consciousness-raising" in mind.

The funniest Nollywood comedy films have lots of similarities with these TV series. The Nigerian society is plural, with over 300 ethnic groups and about 400 native languages. The Hausa-Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba are the three largest ethnic groups representing 70% of the population and each of them has a usually distinct and

recognizable accent when speaking the English language. Each tribe seems to find humour in the manner of speaking of the deeply accented individual from any of the other tribes. Hence, it is commonplace to see comedians making jokes of these accents and other unique tribal mannerisms. This constituted a major trend with characters in *The Village Headmaster, The Masquerade, Second Chance*, and many other TV programmes that had overwhelming viewer ratings in the past. It remains a major part of contemporary Nollywood comedy films. But there have been few changes over the years, and the most noticeable difference is the metamorphosis in infrastructure development that has taken place in technology and fashion trends.

Funke Akindele's 2008 Yoruba slapstick comedy film *Jenifa* (with English subtitles) has two sequels because of its huge box office success. Its popularity broke the indigenous language barrier and became a basis of local commentaries by people of all tribes and culture in Nigeria. It became commonplace to find people in private and public places such as residential compounds, workplaces, markets, bus stops, and beer parlours talking about the film and sometimes mimicking her style of broken English. Jenifa is a Yoruba village girl who finds herself in the city and tries to adapt to the fast and sometimes amorous lifestyle of her new friends. She confidently mistakes her broken English for good English and lampoons semi-illiterate girls who typically, but ignorantly inflect their tribal nuances in their verbal expressions through the English language. Jenifa's ignorant distortion of the English language, coupled with the recognizable body language and mannerism that are unique to the Yorubas is fascinating to the Nigerian audience, and is largely responsible for the audiences' connection with the film. The first sequel of the film *The Return of Jenifa* had gross revenue of 35 million naira (US$140 thousand) at the box office in 2012, which is very impressive returns by typical Nollywood standard. This success inspired a second sequel of the film which was shot on locations in Jamaica and New York because of its popularity with diasporic audiences within and outside Africa.

The three highest grossing films in Nigerian cinemas to date are *30 Days in Atlanta* (2013) and *A Trip to Jamaica* (2016), and *The Wedding Party*, with gross revenues of 137,200,000 naira, 178,500,000, and 453,050,000 naira respectively. These are comedy films of which the first two were produced by popular Nigerian stand-up comedian, Ayo Makun (a.k.a. AY) and directed by Robert Peters. *30 Days in Atlanta* was shot in Nigeria and Atlanta, in the United States of America and features a star-studded local and international cast that includes Vivica A. Fox, Lynn Whitfield, Ayo

Makun, Richard Mofe-Damijo, Majid Michel, Desmond Elliot, Ramsey Nouah, and Mercy Johnson. The film is a romantic comedy that revolves around Akpos (Ayo Makun), a vivacious and typically carefree and funny Warri man who attends a real estate showcase event in Lekki, Lagos state with his more reserved and well-mannered cousin, Richard (Ramsey Nouah) who is an Information Technology consultant. Akpos wins a lottery ticket for a couple to embark on an all-expense paid 30-day trip to Atlanta at the event and chooses to embark on the journey with Richard. Once in the U.S.A., they meet various Nigerian friends from different walks of life living in Atlanta under various conditions that were sometimes ridiculously funny. Richard and Akpos meet their love interests with each of them facing various hurdles to securing their relationships with the women. Richard's former girlfriend, Ese (Mercy Johnson) is the albatross to his love interest, Kimberly (Karlie Redd), the daughter of a Nigerian Restaurant owner in Atlanta. Ese and Kimberly accidentally meet through the skype video call that Richard had made to his mother (Rachel Oniga) who resides in the village. In an attempt to discourage Kimberly off the relationship with Richard whom she is eager to rekindle her own relationship with, Ese mischievously claims to still be his girlfriend. Richard realizes too late what Ese was up to as a disappointed Kimberly tearfully breaks up the relationship, particularly because he never told her about Ese. Meanwhile, Akpos is also in love with Clara (Lynn Whitfield), an Immigration Lawyer who he met through Kimberly's Father, Odiye (Richard Mofe-Damijo) at the restaurant where he had been commissioned to do stand-up comedies. Clara finds his humorous jokes and mannerisms quite fascinating and is eager to learn more about the Nigerian lifestyle and languages. He teaches her a few words in Pidgin English, which along with other attributes delight her. However, just Like Richard and Kimberly, their relationship experiences bumps, but ultimately buds.

Although the technical quality of the film leaves much to be desired when one considers the bad audio output in some scenes and clichéd themes with loosely tied plotlines, but it is typical example of stories that connect with the audience. It sticks to the tradition of comedies having elements of social criticism in them, which Nigerian audiences are attracted to as a result of the humorous channel of delivery. Like the TV comedies of the 1970s to 1980s that were mentioned earlier, it lampooned the Nigerian and diasporic communities in humorous ways and further highlights the culture variance between Africa and the Western world. An example is Uncle Wilson (Kesse Jabari) who Akpos and Richard are shocked to see doing domestic chores such as

cooking, house-keeping and babysitting, which are considered to be the woman's duties in archetypal African society. In Africa, it is the man that characteristically gives instructions in the household, but in Atlanta, as depicted in the film, the reverse is the case, as Uncle Wilson's wife (Vivica A. Fox) is the one giving instructions which he is compelled to carry out. Akpos considers this absurd and is tempted to react angrily but is restrained by Richard to whom he says that Uncle Wilson must be under a spell by his wife. The comedy is mainly slapstick and similar to what audiences would see in Ayo Makun's *AY Live* comedy shows in various Nigerian cities, which is always sold-out. The star-studded cast and the popular brand of comedy attributive to Ayo Makun are arguably the major selling points of this film rather than the genius of the Director. In similar fashion, *A trip to Jamaica* was shot in Nigeria and Jamaica and featured top local actors including Ayo Makun and Funke Akindele. Not only did it become the highest grossing film in Nigeria (local and foreign), but it also set the records of attaining the highest grossing box office film in the first weekend of screening (35 million naira) and the first week of screening (62 million naira) respectively.

Some directors have also carved a niche for themselves as specialists in this genre of film. The most prominent of these is Amayo Uzo Phillips who has over 40 credits to his name, including *Aki Na Ukwa* (2003) the film that brought Chidedu Ikedieze (a.k.a. Aki) and Osita Iheme (a.k.a Pawpaw) – two of Nollywood's best-known comedians – to stardom. Some of his other popular films include: *Chicken Madness* (2006) *Sherikoko* (2011), *Monica the Fighter* (2013), *Soldier Ants* (2013), and *Chikito* (2014).

This is a genre in which actors are giving a lot of freedom to express themselves with improvised dialogue and action. Yoruba comedy actors are particularly known to improvise a lot. Baba Suwe is a classic example of an actor who has featured in over a hundred films, spanning over two decades and has been very successful with instinctive extemporisations that continually evoke laughter in Yoruba film audiences.

WITCHCRAFT OR RITUAL FILMS

The dominance of Nollywood by the witchcraft or ritual films did not start with *Living in Bondage*. As Adesanya (2007, p. 39) points out, the late Hubert Ogunde's 1979 celluloid film *Aiye,* is perhaps responsible for the introduction of the genre. The circulation of the film was short-lived at the time of release, but it left an impression in

the audience, mainly in the western parts of Nigeria where the Yoruba filmmakers are arguably more notorious in the patronage of the genre and influenced others film-makers in that direction. It is remarkable that the executive producer and writer of *Living in Bondage,* Kenneth Nnebue, had earlier produced Yoruba films, which perhaps points to an influence on the Igbo-language film. The genre remains very popular with Nollywood audiences despite the spate of criticism that have been directed at it (Saro-Wiwa 2009, p. 23). Some of the most respected film-makers of the last decade including Tunde Kelani (*Ti Oluwa nile*), Kunle Afolayan (*The Figurine*), and Emem Isong (*Idomo*) still make films that dwell on the issue. The genre has been criticised as degrading the image of Nigeria and Africa as a whole. Yet, it is curious that a producer such as Emem Isong who is known for romance films would occasionally delve into this genre of film with flicks such as *Midnight Whisper* (2012) and *Idomo* (2012) two of the same story in English and Ibibio respectively. It appears as though money is the motivation behind simultaneously making the same film in two languages within the witchcraft genre at a time that many critics frowned at the spate of witchcraft and ritual films. But for her money was only partly a stimulus. I know that her major drive was not financial when the idea of the production first crossed her mind because both are products of a script I wrote in 1997 and which I attempted to produce between 1998 and 1999 in collaboration with Amechi Obi. It didn't work out then and we had to suspend the project. Emem Isong read the script at the time and was intrigued by it from day one. She sought permission from me for the right to produce the film on numerous occasions before I finally gave the nod in 2011. Like some other films within the genre, she believed it reflected the society and that people would immediately connect with the story. And they did. She was aware that some critics viewed the genre as an ugly reflection of Nigeria to the international community. But like other producers of this genre of films she was also positive that Nollywood audiences at home and in the Diasporas warmly embrace such stories.

Figure 4.1

Some of the accused with severed head in the Otokoto case (National Mirror 2013)

This genre of films is an offshoot of the African traditional beliefs in the power and influence of dominant, invincible forces (both good and evil) over the affairs of men, particularly as Faith and religion have become somewhat inextricable from the Nigerian culture both in the traditional and contemporary sense (Ihejirika 2003, p. 67; Uwah 2017, p. 90) This is the reason Gospel films are sometimes intertwined with the Witchcraft-Horror films as is the case with *Idomo* and *Midnight Whispers.*

The popularity of this genre is even more understandable when it is linked with the economy and standard of living of most Nigerians, which plummeted in the 1980s with the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Not only did the crime rate escalate, but ritualistic activities became more popular on the basis that they could provide easy money for struggling families. Stories were told about the disappearances, kidnaps, and killings of missing people by ritualists. It was believed that these ritual activities immediately enriched those who were involved. These stories were given credence when the Otokoto cult ritual killings in eastern Nigeria became common knowledge in Nigeria. Although Otokoto Hotel in Owerri, Imo state, was a commercial hospitality business owned by a businessman, Chief Vincent Duru, but the name, Otokoto, became synonymous with human ritual sacrifices after the famous incident of September 19, 1996, at which an 11-year-old boy, Ikechukwu Okoronkwo, a groundnut seller was lured into the premises of the popular Otokoto Hotel. He was given a bottle of Coca-Cola which had been spiked with drugs before he was killed and beheaded. His genitals and other organs were also removed by the 32 year old male gardener at the hotel, Innocent Ekeanyanwu who buried him in a shallow grave and proceeded to deliver the head to the client, Chief Leonard Unaogu, at Eziama in Ikeduru

Local Council Area of the state. The client had travelled when he arrived, which prompted him to go back to Owerri. Opara, the driver of the Okada (commercial motorcycle) that transported him to Eziama discovered the head in the polythene bag he carried with him in the course of the journey and alerted the police when he alighted. Innocent Ekeanyanwu was subsequently apprehended with the decapitated head at Ikeduru on his way back in a 504 station wagon. Further investigation by the police led to the discovery of the boy's torso at the premises of Otokoto Hotel. The discovery also helped to uncover a syndicate that specialized in ritual killing and the procurement and sale of human parts. The principal suspect in the case, Innocent Ekeayanwu was poisoned while in police custody, resulting in his death three days after his arrest. The news of the incident quickly spread, leading to protests by angry residents of Owerri who demanded justice and the immediate apprehension of everyone involved. The protests quickly escalated into what came to be known as "Otokoto Riot" at which the hotel, Duru's houses, a petrol station, and properties of other suspects as well as those of government officials were burnt and looted.

In 2002, three policemen were sentenced to death by Justice Lawrence Alinor of the Owerri High Court for their involvement in his death. Bodies of several victims of the syndicate were exhumed in the premises of the hotel by the police. The trial of the suspects began on December 9, 1996 and seven years later, on September 23, 2003, Justice Chioma Nwosu-Iheme of an Owerri (Capital of Imo state) High Court sentenced Chief Vincent Duru, alias Otokoto, Chief Leonard Unaogu, and five others to death for their involvement. During the trial in 1997, Duru's son, Obicheozor was arrested in connection with a kidnapping initiated by the Black Scorpions, a gang he belonged to. He was executed by firing squad with six other people in 1996 (Nwokpara and Dike 2003; Fasua 2013; Sunday Mirror 2013; Falayi 2016).

The violent protests that followed the death of 11 year old Ikechuwu Okoronkwo drew the attention of the entire nation to Owerri. Film producers were particularly charmed by the twists and turns of the events that followed arrest of the ritualists, as Duru and other syndicate members appealed their cases at higher courts over the years and eventually lost their appeals. To film-makers, these twists embodied proclivities for great commercial successes and they were right. Among the first ritual films that were produced after the Otokoto incident was *Rituals* (1997) and the commercial success of that film made the witchcraft or ritual genre a staple between 1997 and 2001. Some of the other notable films that fall into this genre are *Blood*

Money, *Witches*, *Alase Aaye*, *Final Year I&II*, *One Chance*, *Abuja Big Girls III*, and *Okija*. This genre is still common in Nigeria despite fewer incidents of ritualistic human sacrifice. They remain relevant and commercially viable due to the continued traditional African beliefs in the existence of evil forces and culpable human beings who engage in human sacrifice. Church messages and deliverance sessions continue to emphasize the machinations of witches and wizards and their thirst for human blood, while also accentuating the supernatural aspect of established religions. It is notable that the execution of Chief Vincent Duru on Sunday, November 13, 2016, thirteen years after his 2003 conviction and twenty years after the murder of Ikechukwu Okoronkwo is likely to whet the appetite of audiences, recapture the attention of film-makers, and create a proliferation of these genre of films from 2017 onwards.

ACTION-THRILLER FILMS

My experiences as co-producer and writer of *Darkest Night* in 2004 as well as co-writer of the unreleased film, *Pensioner* directed by *Izu Ojukwu* in 2007 opened up my scope of understanding of this genre including the motivation behind it and the mentality of the marketers/distributors of such films. I had the opportunities to work at different times on the respective projects with Remmy Jes and Lucky Geo, two of Nollywood's prominent marketers at the time. Such active involvement largely informs my authority and confidence to discourse this genre of films.

The volume of films made in the action-thriller genre is less than half of those that fall within the romance and comedy genres. Nevertheless, it has a sizeable number of followers. This genre of film is always fast-paced and it became the norm among film producers in the 2000s (especially the first half of the decade) as a result of the commercial success of *Broad Daylight* in 2001. The plotline of these films usually revolve around drug syndicates, armed robbers, gangsters, fugitives, and other criminal offenders who the Nigerian police must find and bring to justice. Themes of such films deal with political and business power struggle, fame, love, greed, kidnap, survival of the fittest, and other universal themes in which intense physical action, combat, gun fights, martial arts, car chases, and other violent actions are at play. Many of the films are fictional, while others borrow from true-life situations and historical events.

Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen's film, *Issakaba* is an example of films that were based on historical incidents. It was structured around the events in eastern Nigeria involving a spate of robberies, kidnappings, and other violent activities that instilled an unprecedented level of fear in the communities within the region. The need for protection from criminals led to the creation of vigilante groups, the most popular of which was Bakassi Boys. This group armed themselves with guns and other weapons and successfully curtailed the activities of the criminals. Besides weapons, the Bakassi Boys were known to depend on black magic to repel and neutralize the weapons of the criminals who equally relied on black magic to guarantee the success of their criminal activities. The high success rate recorded by the Bakassi boys in Anambra state was recounted all over the country and has today become a myth. Issakaba (played by Sam Dede), the leader of the vigilante group in the self-titled film possessed very potent magical powers that shielded him against bullets and made him invincible and sometimes invisible to his foes. The film resonated deeply with Nigerians and its commercial success resulted in three sequels and over a dozen similar films by other producers.

Some producers and directors also carved a niche for themselves as action-thriller film-makers. Teco Benso (*Broad Day light – 2001, State of emergency – 2004*, and *War Front 2004*), Tarila Thompson (*Executive Decision* – 2004), Ifeanyi Onyeabor (*Scout* – 2003, *Darkest Night* 2004), and the multiple award winning director, Izu Ojukwu, who is best known for his action films (*Showdown* – 2000, *The World is Mine* – 2001, *Eleventh Hour* – 2003, *Sitanda* – 2006, and *76'* – 2016) became household names because for their direction of films within this genre. Obi Emelonye's *Last Flight to Abuja* (2012) partly falls within this category of films. Some actors have also become associated with action films over the years and they include, Hanks Anukwu, Sam Dede, Jim Iyke, Ramsey Noah, Segun Arinze, and the late J.T. Tom West.

Between 2000 and 2007 action films were more commercially successful than most other genres, at times outselling comedy, romance, and the other popular Yoruba films. This conclusion is based on the frequency of productions in this genre of films within the said period. As mentioned earlier, Nollywood film genre follow popular demands which is measured by the commercial success of a film and the frequency of productions that follow the success of that film. Similarly, the measurement of audience reception is based on the continued commercial successes of a genre of films. Action films are still being made in large volumes in Nollywood and their budgets are usually

very high in comparison to the other genres because of the time and effort it takes to choreograph fight and other action scenes. Props such as guns and police uniforms, as well as explosive special effects do not come cheap. Traffic control and government permits in certain cases also require a lot of money. Izu Ojukwu's '*76 is* a historical film about the former military head of state of Nigeria and it falls into the category of recent Nollywood films that cost over 100 million naira (about US$800 thousand), largely due to the necessity of military equipment and weapons like armoured tanks and guns.

GOSPEL FILMS

The Gospel film genre is one of those I have the most practical knowledge of as I have been involved in numerous movies of this nature at scripting and production stages. My current film project, *Disentangled,* falls within this genre which has a very wide appeal to Nollywood audiences. The stories usually revolve around the supernatural power of God, or Jesus Christ, over evil and diabolical forces that stand as obstacles to the ultimate goal of the protagonist, who invariably surmounts them. This genre owes its popularity to the proliferation of religious groups and ubiquity of churches scattered all over Nigeria. Christianity is the largest religious group in Nigeria with over 50% of the population professing the faith, particularly in the eastern and south-western regions of the country where the Nollywood film distribution is more decentralized with deep-seated network. In Lagos state, for instance, almost every street has at least one church located in it. The same goes for most of the state capitals in the other regions with the exception of the North. The result is that Gospel films have a potential audience-base of over 80 million people.

Gospel films predate Nollywood and the Mount Zion Faith Ministry, which was founded in 1985 by Mike Bamiloye, the most prominent Gospel film-maker in Nigeria, has been at the forefront of evangelical film-making in Nigeria. The drama outreach arm of the ministry started with a stage play titled: *Hell in Conference* on July 11, 1986 at the National Christian Teachers Conference, Ilesha, in Osun state. Since then, the ministry has performed in churches and toured various Nigerian cities, including Kano, Zaria, and Kaduna, as well as international tours to Cameroon, Ghana, and Kenya. However, it was not until 1990 that the first Mount Zion film, *The Unprofitable Servant,* was made and aired on national television. The film was shot on analogue video camera

format as were the other films the ministry shot at the start of the 1990s and distributed commercially in churches and various Christian books and video shops – even though the original motive of the producers was evangelical rather than commercial (Bamiloye cited in Naijarules.com 2013; Balogun 2014; Oteng 2014).

The Ministry has made over 40 films since then, recycling the same set of actors. Mike Bamiloye and his wife, Gloria Bamiloye, have played the lead roles in most of these films. It started as an amateur production company as none of its founding members had formal theatre or film training. A lot has changed over the years with some of Nollywood actors and theatre practitioners now featuring in some of their films. Doyin Hassan is the most prominent of them. Mount Zion Faith Ministries is a household name in Nigeria and some of its most famous films include *Agbara Nla*, *The Perilous times* (1992), *and Prodigal Ones* (2008). The ministry also has international affiliations and has held conferences, workshops and seminars in various countries including Ghana, Cameroon, Kenya, United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. The workshops often include the production of short films, which sometimes inspire feature film productions in collaboration with the Diaspora communities. These joint productions include *Forces Against My Soul* (Canada 2012); *Waiting for the Prince, Dangerous Influence, Crack In the Wall, Prodigal Ones* and *Broken Pitcher* (Dallas, Texas US. 2009-2012); and *Harvest of Crises* (2013), *Caught in the Wind* (2014), and *The Return* (2015) and *Harmony Deal* (2015) which were made in Perth, Western Australia. The ministry has been an inspiration to many younger evangelical film-makers all over Nigeria. Oreofe Williams is one Nollywood producer inspired by Mike Bamiloye's films and has made a number of films which include *Pastors on Strike* (2010), *Spirit on Drugs* (2014), *Joy to the Wise* (2009), *Angels Taking Bribes* (2013), *A Holiday in Hell* (2012), and *The Gospel of Judas (2014).* Like Bamiloye, he has shot many films entirely in English and almost an equal number of films in the Yoruba language. His films however differ from those of Mount Zion Faith Ministries in diverse ways. First, he uses mainstream and trained Nollywood actors – including Dele Odule, Funsho Adeolu, and Gbenga Richards. This choice of famous mainstream Nollywood actors suggests that he is aiming at a general appeal both to Christians and non-Christians. Second, unlike the Mount Zion Faith Ministries whose film distribution pattern is devoid of strategic commercial appeal because of the emphasis placed on soul-winning and affordability, Williams' films are commercial. Hence, the packaging of his films is far more strategically designed to make profit at

levels similar to secular films. The DVD/CD jackets, posters, and other marketing resources are far more attractive than those of Mount Zion Faith Ministries. These include publicity materials for TV, radio, social media, Print advertisements and other forms of promotional resources.

There is thin line between most gospel or evangelical films and the witchcraft-horror films because of the noticeable use of Black Magic or Juju as a supernatural weapon. *Living in Bondage* partly falls within this genre, especially from the perspective of the lead character, Andy, who murdered his wife and was subsequently haunted by her ghost, but eventually finds salvation in the church. Lady Apostle Helen Ukpabio, the founder of Liberty Foundation Gospel Ministries based in Calabar, Cross Rivers state is a renowned producer of this kind of film with credits including *End of the Wicked* (1999), *Married to a Witch* (2001), and *Power to Blind* (2003). She is known as the Nigerian Witch-Hunter. Child rights activists have described her films as inflammatory and partly responsible for cases of abuse in which children and women are labelled witches with severe consequences. Oppenheimer (2010) describes Ukpabio as being so well-known that her "critics say her teachings have contributed to the torture or abandonment of thousands of Nigerian children — including infants and toddlers — suspected of being witches and warlocks". There are thousands of Churches and preachers across Africa with beliefs and practices that are similar to Helen Ukpabio's. They offer what is popularly known as "Deliverance" sessions or crusades at which those purportedly possessed or haunted by demons are set free. What makes Helen Ukpabio stand out from the pack is the popularity enabled by her film productions. This type of films are based on Christian denominations that highlight the alleged vices of witches and wizards and emphasize exorcism (Karimi 2009). However there are many other gospel films whose plots and thematic concerns ignore witchcraft, Juju, and rituals. Examples of such films include: *On Bended Knees* (2012), directed by Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen, *Hide and Seek* (2013), directed by Izu Ojukwu, and recently, *Knocking on Heaven's Door* (2014), the musical film that was produced by Emem Isong. The plot devices of these films emphasize the difficulty experienced by Christians in their battles with inevitable temptations that clog the Christian faith and the path through which this temptations are either overcome or acceded to. *On bended Knee* focuses on the acrimony that bedevil church boards at times as a result of envy, ambition, greed and other vices that creep into the church. Many other Gospel films highlight themes of unconditional love, consequences of fornication or adultery, and

several other themes intended to highlight the sovereign power and love of God to humanity. Films with that focus on spirituality are not limited to Nigeria, but widespread across Africa and the diasporic communities. (Meyer 2015, p. xii, 8 – 12) cites the example of Ghanaian film of which many have similarly attributed central importance of spiritual dimensions to their everyday life and the influence of Pentecostalism on Ghanaian films.

TRADITIONAL AFRICAN FILMS

This group is also somewhat related to the Witchcraft-Horror films. People who were part of the Yoruba popular theatre of the 1970s and 1980s champion it. These are the Traditional artists who have worked for over five decades on stage, TV, and in film (Celluloid) with major interest in films that espouse individual Nigerian cultures and traditions. They could be fictional or factual, with historical or contemporary storylines, but their major attribute is the cultural showcase in terms of location, costumes, props, and ideological dispositions. They seem to promote the efficacy of the traditional and cultural approach to life over the western methods and sometimes suggest a syncretic pattern to life. The veteran filmmaker, Tunde Kelani remains the most famous of this category of film-makers in modern times. Films such as *Ti Oluwa Ni Ile* (1993), *Saworoide* (1999), *Thunderbolt: Magun* (2001), *Arugba* (2010) are typical modern African traditional stories that have won awards at different times. *Thunderbolt* won the award for the best screenplay the same year that I was nominated in the same award category at the REEL awards in 2001. The concept of modern African traditional stories is a paradox. Nevertheless, it is not strange in the contemporary African society for individuals and traditional institutions to integrate traditional ethos with modern approaches to doing things. Kelani's films continue to be popular not just among the Yoruba people, but among Nigerians as a whole.

Another filmmaker that has recently made a mark with this genre is Kunle Afolayan, a protégée of Tunde Kelani, and son of the late Adeyemi Afolayan (popularly known as Ade Love) who was one of the foremost film-makers of the 1970s. His films, *Irapada* (2008) and *The Figurine* (2010) fit into the traditional African genre that employ the combination of English, Yoruba, and other indigenous languages while projecting African traditional culture in contemporary and syncretic manner. They feature traditional cultural practices that date back thousands of years using modern

tools in a contemporary African society. In pre-colonial times, cowries were used for divination and also served as a legal tender. Today, various legal tenders such as Naira, Dollars, and Pounds have been used as part of divination materials used by Witch doctors in movie scenes as a connection between their desperate clients and the unseen higher spiritual forces for protection or solution to their problems. My script, *Uyai*, which was produced by Emem Isong is an example of films in which syncretism is at play when a character looks to Christianity or Islam simultaneously with traditional African religion for solutions to a problem. This is usually consequent on the desperation of the character to overcome an intractable problem that has defied modern solutions. These problems range from medical diagnosis and conditions that conventional doctors could not cure, a business venture that is in crisis, to problems relating to family and relationships. It is a paradox that is relevant to many Africans today and an ideology that juxtaposes tradition and modernity with the belief that they both have a place in contemporary society.

The most popular offshoot of the traditional African Genre are Epic films and Historical films. But differences abound in some ways. Traditional African films, as mentioned earlier, incorporate plot settings in either contemporary periods where diverse language films fall into or pre-colonial periods where Epic films are generally domiciled. On the other hand, Traditional African films could be fictional as is the case with most contemporary films within the genre or they could be based on historical facts. Despite the differences that abound particularly between Epic and Historical films, stories enacted in Epic films are sometimes mistaken for historical facts by Nollywood audiences because of the similarity in the location setting, period costume and props accessories, and the narrative techniques. Therefore, to create a distinction between them, it becomes pertinent to discuss them individually and separately from Traditional African Film genre.

Epic Films

These are films that are mostly based on folklores passed down through generations. In general, the leading characters in these epic films must either be fearless, quintessential or possess the will or the ability to achieve a feat that ultimately benefits his people or his cosmic environment. The federation of Nigeria is multilingual and multicultural with diverse traditional, cultural, and mythological beliefs that are unique to each of the

major and minor tribes. They all have legends around which a body of stories extol the exploits of gods or heroes. The Yorubas have various popular myths about creation, legends, and deities such as Oduduwa, Obatala, Ogun, Sango, and Esu among others. The Hausas have the legend of Bayajidda and the myth about the formation of the seven Hausa states, after he killed the snake at the well of Daura. The Igbos have myths about Odinani and deities like Amadioha, Ala, Igwe, and Alusi. Films have been made about some of these legends and myths, which over the years have taken on a life of their own as people often mistake them for historical fact.

The 1996 film directed by Bolaji Dawoodu, *The Battle of Musanga* is the first epic film that was made in Nollywood. It is about the Musanga kingdom, which was located in the east of the Niger Delta area in 1863 when the first Europeans entered the hinterland. The storyline is fictional, but concept is based on the fact that African communities resisted white incursions into their lands in precolonial times and eventually fell to the superior fire-power of Europeans. The story culminates in the resistance of the tyrannical King, Mudame Konolinga, and his mobilization of his people to annihilate the white men who he perceived as a threat to his Kingship and kingdom. Like other Nollywood films in the epic genre, it was set in the hinterland with massive mountain surrounds and a large cast. Femi Lasode's *Sango: The Legendary African King* swiftly followed it in 1998. It is based on the legend of Sango, the Yoruba god of thunder and lightning and there have been many stories about his legend. However, unlike *the Battle of Musanga, Sango: The Legendary African King*, is based on historical folklore that is widely held sacred by the Yorubas. But it was Don Pedro Obaseki and Andy Amenechi's *Igodo* that tilted many producers' interest in the direction of epic films. It was a well-made film and a huge commercial success with over a million copies sold till date. In personal conversation with the writer of *Igodo*, Kabat Esosa Egbon, in 2016, he cited the producer and marketer of the film, Ojiofor Ezeanyaeche as saying that DVD copies of the film are still in demand over sixteen years after the initial release. As a result the commercial success of Igodo, epic films became a phenomenon from the late 1990s to late 2000s. *Ijele* and *Oduduwa* are some of the most famous films in this genre. Epic films transport the audience from the present into the past, and relate to them through visual means, the fascinating stories of myths and legends that they may have previously read about or heard of. Even more fascinating to them are the period props and costumes, some of which may have become extinct. The audience's enthrallment often results in patronage of such films.

Epic films are expensive because of the period props, costumes, and locations that most of them require. The volume of epic films reduced greatly at the end of the 2000s and only few of note have been made between 2010 and 2017. Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen's *Invasion 1897*, a historical film about the invasion of the Benin Empire by British forces in 1897 is the latest of such films to attract public attention. Many books and plays by popular Nigerian authors and playwrights had been written about Ovonramwen N'ogbaisi, the incumbent king of Benin Empire at the time of the invasion, many years before the film was made. The most widely read of the plays include Ola Rotimi's Ovonramwen N'ogbaisi (1974) and Ahmed Yerima's *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen* (1998), The VIP premiere of the film was hosted by the British Museum in London in August 2014.

Historical Films

This genre of historical are didactic in nature and mostly dwell on famously documented stories such as the origin, formation, and foundation of individual tribes and states, traditional and religious icons and symbols. Unlike Epic films which dwell mainly on pre-colonial stories, historical films have no such barrier and are simply based on history regardless of whether the narratives are set in pre-colonial, colonial, or post-colonial times.

Historical films fall into two major categories – fantasy and reality. They often involve magic or witchcraft and the period setting of most of them fall into several centuries or millennia ago. Films like *Sango* and *Oduduwa* were inspired by Yoruba mythologies about the creation of the world and the origin of the Yoruba race, with the latter also connected to the creation of Bini, which today is known as Benin. These narratives are also well documented in Nigerian history books. But in a sense, some aspects of the stories that describe the supernatural powers and immortality of these beings that have become deities could also be described as fantasy, as they were based on the oral narratives passed down from generation to generation without well-established empirical evidence. On the other hand, reality films in this genre are based on factual historical narratives with empirical bases. Films like *'76* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* are fictional films based on actual historical events. *76* is based on the bloody coup of 1976 in which the then military head of state, General Murtala Mohammed, was assassinated on February 13, 1976. The story was told from a dual perspective – the

point of view of a soldier who was wrongfully indicted in the coup and the point of view of the wife of a patriotic soldier. In an interview with J.K. Obatala, the film director, Izu Ojukwu (Obatala 2014) revealed that the script received approval from the Nigerian military, which also provided logistical support for the production. Similarly, *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a love story that captures the life of those caught up in the events of the Nigerian civil war (also known as the Biafran war) that lasted between July 6, 1967 and January 15, 1970 as a result of the attempted secession of the south-eastern provinces of Nigeria known as Biafra. *Half of a Yellow sun* and *76'* among other films are post-independence films that are based on incidents that happened in the late 1960s and 1970s respectively and are founded on factual events with both real and fictional characters. Whereas there are other films that are fully based on true historical events with the central characters going by the names of the actual people mentioned in the historical events. *Invasion 1897* is one of such films that are faithful in their narratives to the larger percentage of the historical incidents.

CITY GIRL FILMS

Incidents and stories of transactional sex between young girls and Aristos (Nigerian neology for wealthy men who patronize university students) are generally very interesting to Nigerians and Africans, which makes such films commercially viable. Films about city girls ordinarily would not be classified as a genre by itself, but there are very many films that have dealt with the plight of girls who dream of making it big in Nigerian cities. These are the types of films that focus on the Good-time-women that Onookome Okome and Kenneth Little made reference to in their writing on the representation of women in Nigerian films (see Literature review in chapter 1). City-girl films revolve around girls that sleep with men for money, either as regular sex hawkers who can be found on the streets or in brothels, or the more sophisticated self-styled women who are recruited by pimps on behalf of their wealthy clients for one-night stands or longer. University students and girls from other tertiary institutions mostly fall into the latter category of money-for-sex girls whose motives of selling sex ranges from financial hardship to wilful indulgence in the sex business as a regular day-to-day profession.

The economic hardship that resulted from the austerity measures that were introduced by the Federal government in the 1980s made Nigerians adapt in different

ways to the SAP. While some desperate people turned to criminal means of fending for themselves and families, some women channelled their time and energies into prostitution. Sex traffickers made huge sums of money through the prostitution rings that they coordinated between rural and metropolitan areas in Nigeria and Europe. It was not uncommon to see university girls involved in the sex business as a means of funding their education or maintaining their consumer lifestyles. They were often rewarded with money, cars, clothes, and access to an exclusive club of business moguls and decision-makers. On the other hand, the result was sometimes catastrophic when girls became involved with drug or ritualists.

The Nigerian media constantly run news stories about young girls, especially from Benin City, who are recruited into prostitution in Europe (particularly Italy) by an international syndicate. The girls, who could be as young as twelve years old, are in some cases handed over to the representatives of the syndicates by poor parents. The representatives ensure that a certain amount of money is sent to the parents in foreign currencies. The result is that other parents see the cash rolling in for their neighbours, and without consideration to the risks involved, hand their own children to these representatives. When the girls get to Europe and realize that they had been deceived, it becomes very difficult for them opt out as the threat of death and blackmail deters them.

Kenneth Nnebue was a trailblazer with his approach to the city-girl films with *Glamour Girls* (1994), which was a huge commercial success, commensurate with the profit made on *Living in Bondage*. *Glamour Girls* was themed around sex, power, and fame, with near-nude and raunchy scenes. Although there are no sexually graphic scenes involved in the film, but given that there was scarcely any mainstream Nigerian film prior to this that showcased so much kissing and fondling, the 18+ censorship rating it received could be described as very fortunate. There are films such as *Freedom Bank* (2008) with no sex or violence that the censors' board equally rated 18+. It is this inconsistency in film classification and rating amongst other controversial issues that has led to complaints and legal suits and counter suits between film-makers and NFVCB over the years. Example of such is Helen Ukpabio's legal action against the board for refusal to grant approval for the release of *Rapture* in 2002 and NFVCB's 2004 suit against her for exhibiting films such as *Coven, End of the Wicked, and Child Rescue* without classification. NFVCB came out victorious in the first case, but lost the second in 2010. *Glamour Girls* is star-studded and the featured actors include Liz

Benson, Eucharia Anunobi, Dolly Unachukwu, Barbara Odoh, Tina Amuziam, Ngozi Ezeonu and the late Jennifer Okere. It is about four female friends lured into prostitution. The irony is, though, the women were initially tricked into prostitution, over time the huge gains they made from it pushed each of them into building her own sex trafficking business, until greed, envy, and jealousy set them against one another. It was the first English language film that was made by Kenneth Nnebue and it set the model for a flood of voyeuristic city-girl films. Other huge commercial successes included *Domitila* (1996), *Onome* (1996), *Runs* (2009), *and Aristos* (2003).

Films in this genre continue to interest producers and audiences because real life situations relating to raunchy city girls and the repercussions of the choices they make are still common. The stories usually end tragically for some of the prominent characters and there is often a cathartic reaction from the central character. The ideology of these genre is to re-enact the life-style of city girls with as much detail as possible embedded in captivating entertainment whilst ensuring that the audience is not lost in the façade. They are mostly didactic and expose the negative repercussion of the actions of wayward city-girls.

GENRES IN NIGERIAN LANGUAGE FILMS

Nigerian language films have unique attributes in the political, social, and cultural sphere of Nigeria and the sheer magnitude of space that they occupy in Nollywood. But then, the integral genres within this category of films is principally the same as the major genres discussed earlier, with themes of Love, Greed, Power and Politics, Envy and Jealousy, Witchcraft and the Supernatural given pre-eminence. What makes them different from English language films is that their individual scope of audience is narrower and mainly of certain geographical and language origin within and outside Nigeria. These indigenous films usually highlight societal issues that are sometimes cultural to their target groups. Nevertheless, a number of them resonate with a universal audience when subtitled in English. Such is the case with indigenous language films of the past and present including *Aiye* (Yoruba language), *Living in Bondage* (Igbo language), and *Uyai* (Ibibio). The major economic sense of such films is that illiterates and people who do not understand the English language make up a sizeable number of the Nigerian population and are often excited to see them. The United Nations

Programmes Advisor in Nigeria, Dr Mohammed Alkali (cited in Bakare 2015) revealed the result of the recent United Nations survey which indicates that 65 million Nigerians, of which 35 million are adult, remain illiterate. Hence there is a huge market to be exploited by film-makers. This is more so as some indigenous languages native to Nigeria are spoken in other countries where English is not the official language. There are Efik-speaking communities in French-speaking Cameroon, Hausa speaking communities in Ghana and French-speaking Republic of Niger among several others, Yoruba-speaking communities abound in Portuguese-speaking Brazil, French-speaking Togo and Benin Republic, and parts of the Caribbean among others. Igbo emigrants are widespread all over the world, and so, Nollywood language films have enormous potentials and have survived the test of time from the 1970s to date. Consequently, the Study of the Nigerian film industry cannot be complete without a reference to the value of Nigerian Indigenous Language films to the history, structure, and economic paradigm of the industry.

CONCLUSION

My active involvement in the production and post-production process including marketing and distribution over a couple of decades largely informs my authority and confidence in adding to global knowledge through this discourse. I have made a strong argument that whilst there are other factors behind genre choices by the Nollywood filmmaker, pecuniary motives remain the chief catalyst. Nevertheless, the desire to tell new stories that resonate with the audience in ways that project and correlate with cultural physiognomies and nuances cannot be understated. Nollywood has been and remains a high volume and low budget industry, which has been the foundation, and perhaps, the pillar of its longevity from its inception. Yet strong stories have also been key to its survival and sustainability. However, many critics do not consider those qualities enough for an industry which has become a model for film-making in Africa. They clamour for good cinematic techniques. Pasley (2011, Pg. 9) raises the important question of how cinematic techniques are used in the exploration of both concepts and expression of the oral through visual formats. She notes that it is concepts rather than story that turn films into works of art, and adds that good film-making includes ideas, filmmaking techniques, and social commentary (whether over or covert). It is notable

that more than ever, Nollywood, is gradually incorporating proper cinematic techniques that are beginning to pay off at the box office. This is more so for films conceptualised for cinema exhibition, particularly those conceived for international film festivals where Nigerian films are now gaining traction. Nollywood took centre stage at the 41st Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) with the exhibition of eight Nigerian films – *Okafor's Law* (2016), *'76* (2016), *Taxi Driver: Oko Ashewo* (2015), *The Arbitration* (2016), *Just Not Married* (2016), *The Wedding Party* (2016), *93 Days* (2016), *and Green White Green* (2016)) – a feat which had never been achieved at any international film festival. For most of these films including others such as *Fifty* (2015), *October 1* (2015), and *The CEO* (2016), those elements of good film-making stated by Pasley are ingrained.

Nollywood films are now at the front burner of movie theatres in Nigeria, registering box office figures which had hitherto been the preserve of blockbuster Hollywood films. Year after year indigenous films now break box office records, confining world acclaimed films to the rear. More producers are now willing to invest heavily in film production with the belief that they can be recouped at the cinema. Yet, it must be said that not every well-made and well-funded film breaks the bank at the cinemas. Losses still abound. Steve Gukas' highly rated *93 Days*, which was shot on a budget of 400 million naira (USD$1 million) made only 20 million naira after the 2016 cinema screening nationwide, despite the array of international cast that includes Danny Glover. Likewise, The CEO made only 19.9 million naira despite its production budget of 600 million naira (over US$1 million). This is far cry from the 176 million naira and 450 million naira box office revenues generated by romantic comedies, *A Trip to Jamaica* and *The Wedding Party* respectively, in the same year. In response to the poor box office performance of *93 Days*, the director, Steve Gukas (In a telephone conversation with me), expressed regret that such a good film received less than expected patronage by cinema goers and noted the preference of Nigerians for comedy over other genre of films. It highlights the importance of genre in film production and presupposes the necessity of audience research before production. Nevertheless, it should not undermine the patronage of other genres, some of which have done very well at the box office. Instead, one might point again to the low budget characteristic of Nollywood as a direction that producers should not stray too far from. Moreover, films such as *Fifty* and *The Wedding Party* 1 and 2 had financial support from state governments and corporate organisations either at conception stage or at conclusion of

post-production and harnessed multiple revenue streams such as high ticketed exclusive premieres, inflight rights, online streaming and other revenue generating streams that helped to recover costs.

In as much as genre plays a significant role in an audience determination of film patronage or consumption, the industrial structure of Nollywood is even more significant in the scheme of things in the Nigerian film business. This is so because the operational and creative milieu under which genre exists is guided by the overarching structural make-up of the industry. By this, I mean the existence or non-existence of proactive government policies and regulations, stakeholders unions, guilds, and associations, marketing and distribution structures, and etcetera, are determinant of the success or otherwise of creative processes in the market and consumption domain. Thus, it becomes imperative to delve into the industrial structure of Nollywood to establish the influences and impediments of production and consumption of films and how they ultimately steer the evolution of the Nigerian film industry within and outside the country.

5. INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURE OF NOLLYWOOD

INTRODUCTION

The structure of a film industry plays a vital role in the success – or otherwise – of its productiveness in each country that such culture exists. Business Dictionary (2017) defines structure as "construction or framework of identifiable elements (components, entities, factors, members, parts and steps) which gives form and stability, and resists stresses and strains". In other words, structure serves as the foundation and pillar that clutches diverse components towards a common goal in a seamless fashion. Hence, the importance of a virile industrial structure towards the development of the film sector cannot be wished away. The structural model established by individual film industries is usually reflective of its cultural and national identity, given the role of cinema at the forefront of image projection. De Vinck and Lindmark (2012, Pg. 24) succinctly describe the value of the film sector in their assertion that "It is generally recognised that the film sector has an industrial and a cultural component, which in turn has consequences for the way it functions and the manner in which policymakers address it. Most importantly, the film sector as a cultural industry creates both economic and cultural value". The topic of organisation and structure remains dominant among Nollywood practitioners. In Jane Thorburn's documentary (2014), multiple award-winning director, Amaka Igwe and other practitioners featured in it reiterated the need for structure and so did all the practitioners that I interviewed as part of this thesis. The worth of Nollywood has consistently increased over the years and continues to astound even the worst pessimists of the industry, as it has steadily added value to the Nigerian economy. Nollywood films made up 30% of box office revenue in Nigerian cinemas in 2016 topping 3.5 billion naira – US$11.5 (Adegoke 2017). But then practitioners argue that the industry is still lurking in the abyss of its potentials in spite of the increasing value, growing profile, and global interest. The general perception is that the strides achieved so far are the fruits of independent efforts by filmmakers, and therefore, to attain a proper structure of the film industry, which is key to unlocking its docile kinetics, Nigerian policymakers must wake up to their responsibilities and make conscious efforts towards proper regulations and capital investment. Although there has been a gradual policy shift in favour of Nollywood such as the provision of grants, but it is generally considered still too little by industry stakeholders. For instance, the 3

billion naira (US$20 million) intervention fund/grant scheme through the Project ACT (Advancing Creativity and Technology) in 2013, under the auspices of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and National Orientation was aimed at the development of the film industry. The initiative was prompted by the recognition of the powerful role of film in the transmission of cultural values and as an apparatus exploited for subtle diplomacy by governments and individuals or institutions (Usman and Ohwovoriole 2017, p.331) Moreover, the acknowledgement of the increasing worth of Nollywood to national GDP stimulated an attempt to create a formal industry for taxation purposes. A former member of the Project ACT board, Professor Ekwuazi (cited in Igwe 2017, Pg. 1364) revealed that "what we tried to do was capture filmmakers in the tax nets, bringing them into the formal sector of the economy". Igwe surmises the requirements of the grants and loans proposal to include a company registration and evidences of tax payments for a period of one year. But then, only tiny fraction of industry practitioners had access to these incentives and a lot more need to be done by the government.

The Nigerian film industry, in its current state, has a very sophisticated industrial structure. It started at Idumota, a densely populated area with clustered buildings and stores, located on Lagos Island, which served as the pivot of Nollywood right from its early days in 1992, given that it was the financial backbone of an otherwise semi-crippled industry crawling and begging for support. It remains a vital part of the Nigerian film industry. It is one of the busiest markets in Lagos, which is also popular for the sale of electronics, demonstrating that media hardware and software are closely interrelated in Nollywood. In the early 1990s when the financial prospect of filmmaking was raised through the success of *Living in Bondage*, Igbo traders who dealt mainly in electronic goods instantly saw an additional source of revenue and immediately spread their business interests to film production. Not that they made the films by themselves, but they were the financiers, and each one of them began to look out for experienced film-makers to produce films on their behalf.

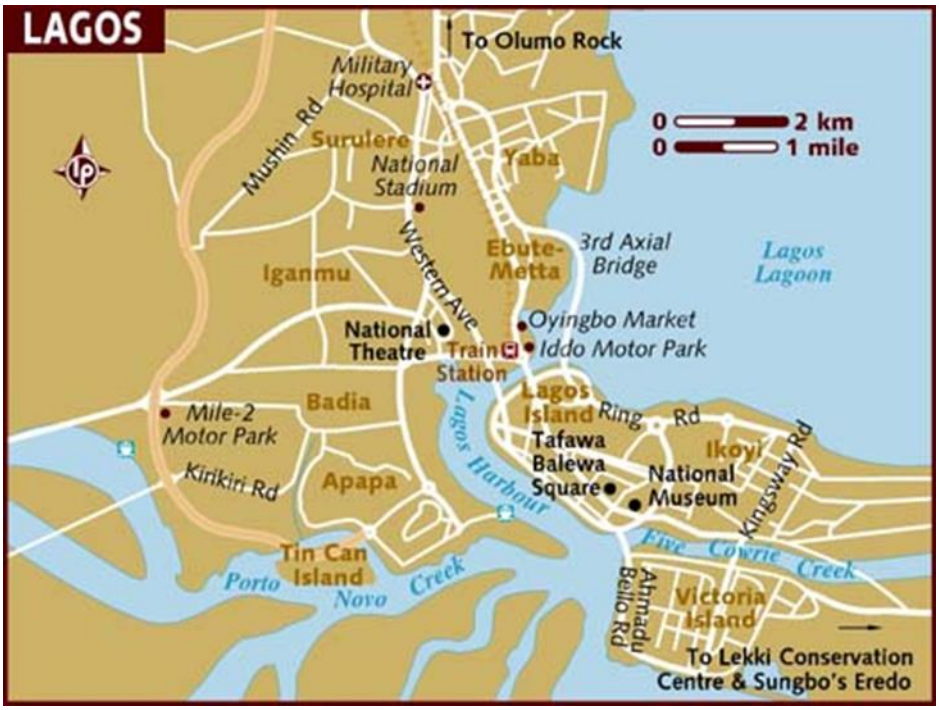
A number of the film-makers at the time had left the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) as Independent Producers as a result of their services being either severed or less relevant because of the influx of cheap Mexican soap operas into Nigeria. Before 1992 broadcasting in Nigeria was the exclusive preserve of federal, state, and regional governments and no individual or private entity was allowed to own a television or radio station in spite of the provision in section 36 (2) of the 1979

constitution that “every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions”. This monopoly was festered by the clause in sub-section 2 which stated that “no person other than government of the federation or of a state or any other person or body authorized by the President, shall own, establish or operate a television or wireless broadcasting station for any purpose whatsoever”. This clause clarifies that the freedom of expression stipulated in subsection 2 did not include private ownership of broadcast media. However, the promulgation of Decree 38 – now act of parliament – under the Ibrahim Babangida military regime in 1992, led to the deregulation of broadcasting in Nigeria with the establishment of the National Broadcasting Commission [NBC] which was empowered to grant licences for private broadcasting in Nigeria (National Broadcasting Commission 2009). Nevertheless, it was not until 1996 that the first private television station, Clapper Board Television, started broadcasting on channel 45 UHF. Hence, television stations were still owned and controlled by federal and state governments, most of which at the time were reluctant to pay for independent local television dramas that were more expensive than the cheaply imported Mexican soaps.

While Idumota in Lagos Island became the marketing hub for Nigerian films (Iweka Road, Onitsha in eastern Nigeria later became another hub), Surulere on the mainland became like the Nigerian version of Hollywood, serving as the rallying point for film producers, actors, and directors. ‘Abe Igi’ – a Yoruba phrase which means ‘underneath a tree’ – at the National Arts Theatre, Iganmu, Surulere, Lagos State, was the place where artistes, crew members, and producers met, largely due to their inability to hire offices of their own in the early 1990s. The choice of the iconic National Arts Theatre is easily understandable; it was built by the Federal government as the venue of the major events at the second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture tagged FESTAC 77, which was hosted by Nigeria and co-organised by UNESCO (Gaunt 1977). The theatre was built as a state-of-the-art facility, equipped with theatres for stage and cinema, as well as conference halls and other entertainment facilities. However, it was outside the theatre building, under the trees that served as point of contact for industry. Artists from various entertainment media usually met over bottles of beer, food, and other forms of refreshment to put together projects. Most of the practitioners were already used to meeting there prior to the advent of Nollywood, as many of them such as Jide Kosoko, Enebeli Elebuwa, and Sam Loco Efe, worked in theatre and regularly did business at the National Theatre. Other regular attenders were

those who worked in Yoruba-language films, which had managed to survive during the drought years of Nigerian films, albeit, with little or no money to take to the banks. No money was required to rent a meeting space at Abe'gi; all you needed to do was to buy drinks and the meetings proceed unhindered. Most decisions concerning productions were made under the trees at the National Theatre and this is where producers and marketers tied up businesses, except in few instances that required them meeting at Idumota or elsewhere.

Figure 5.1



Map of Lagos courtesy of Lonely Planet 2014

It was at this point that Nollywood structures started to fall into place as various guilds were formed and the configuration of the industry began. As more and more film production companies started to spring up due to the rising demand for Nollywood films, the spaces at Abe'gi became too congested and it became necessary to find other meeting points, which led to the birth of other relatively popular venues such as Ecowas Hotel, Kilo Hotel, Bookies Hotel, and Winnis Hotel – all within the Surulere axis of Lagos. Uzzis Hotel in Festac was one of the very few meeting places outside Surulere. Winnies Hotel quickly became the most prominent business location amongst Nollywood practitioners.

By 1996, only few film-makers owned production offices. Amongst them were industry-leading film-makers such as Zeb Ejiro whose office was in Aguda, Surulere and Tunde Kelani, whose office remains in Charity, Oshodi. By the close of the decade many more film-makers had offices mainly in Surulere. Since then, several film production companies have sprung up across Nigeria and the growth and development of Nollywood is now a topic of interest across the academia and the creative industries.

As with other film industries, the four distinct but indissoluble broad categories of the industrial structure of Nollywood are Production, Distribution, Exhibition, and Regulation. But it is the unique and sometimes awkward dimensions of their relationship which has somehow gained a symbiotic union that is of greater interest to this discuss.

1. PRODUCTION

Production quality of Nigerian films has often been subject to criticism by film scholars and critics (Madichie and Ibeh 2006; Barnard and Tuomi 2008; Hugo 2009; Madichie 2010; Rice 2012). Nollywood films are produced on very small budgets because of the risks involved in losing huge sums of money to piracy. This also explains why producers and investors are reluctant to make celluloid films. Celluloid film productions are very expensive, especially in a country such as Nigeria that has very little facility to accommodate it.

Unlike the structural makeup of Hollywood in which films are funded mostly by distribution-based studios such as Universal, Paramount, and Fox, nothing like that exists in Nollywood, which is driven by private financing through individuals, occasionally by companies such as Nigerian Breweries Ltd, and rarely by government. There is only a couple of international standard film studios in Nigeria and they are both government-owned. The Cross Rivers state government owns paradise studio (formally known as Studio Tinapa) in Calabar, which is now being managed by Hi Media Limited and the Nigerian film corporation studio in Jos is owned by the federal government. But unlike Hollywood film studios, the Nigerian studios do not fund films, but instead, the spaces are made available for hire. Unfortunately, the overwhelming number of Nigerian film-makers cannot afford to pay for them and the proximity of the location of the film-makers to the studios presents more difficulty. Calabar, for instance, is approximately 752 kilometres away from Lagos where about 50% of Nigerian films

are shot and the cities of Asaba in South-South region of Nigeria and Enugu and Onitsha in eastern Nigeria where about 40% of Nollywood films are shot are not less than 263 kilometres away. These are where the majority of the producers who also double as marketers are. They prefer to shoot in real life environments that they are used to and are unwilling to spend extra money on studio spaces which they are not accustomed to filming in. As a result the studios have been relatively redundant in regards to film productions. Apart from *Half of a Yellow Sun*, which was shot in Studio Tinapa and real life environments in Enugu, scarcely has any other film been shot there. The same goes for the Nigeria Film Corporation studio in Jos.

Individual film producers either make their own films with personal funds or in most cases source funding from elsewhere. The way it works is that a producer, who in some instances doubles as the script writer, sources a script and finds a financier who agrees on a profit-sharing formula, which could be between 30 to 40 percent and 60 to 70 percent in favour of the financier if that financier is funding the entire film process from pre-production to the marketing stage. The sharing formula largely depends on the level of financial contribution (in cash or kind) and the bargaining power of each of the parties involved. Over 85% of Nollywood films are privately funded and the producers' financial benefits are dependent on the amount of profit made. But there are other cases of privately funded productions in which the producer merely serves as an administrative and or coordinative office with no financial stake whatsoever in the profit made from the production. In such cases, the producer agrees on a personal fee and is paid for the job done before and after the production and post-production phases of the film is complete. An example is Emem Isong's producer function in *Apaye* in 2013. Films like that usually have budgets in excess of US$100 thousand dollars and the producer's fees are possibly equivalent to what he or she could have made from the profit realized from a lower budget production.

There are other films in which the financier has little or no interest in making profit, but takes pride in being associated with the project. Such financiers could be companies that are funding productions either as part of their social responsibility policies or a way of further boosting their brand. Izu Ojukwu's Digital Jungle Studio produced all of AMBO films on behalf of Nigerian Breweries Plc between 2006 and 2011. Over US$500 thousand was spent on six films during the period and the producers' remunerations were based on the completion of the films from production to post-production rather than marketing and distribution phases. The premieres of

films that fall into this category are usually very well publicised. The film-making process in Nollywood is similar to what is obtainable in other film industries in the world, but with very little difference in the way scripts are written, produced, marketed, and distributed. The process and time-frame of production to market is light-speed and has for decades been subject to intense criticism (Stollery 2001; Madichie and Katwalo 2005; Madichie and Ibeh 2006; Saro-Wiwa 2009). Madichie echoes the sentiments of these critics in his assessment that:

> Nollywood's informal, intuitive and opportunistic marketing has contributed to the poor product and production quality. Furthermore, the fragmented and largely disorganized distribution and marketing communications (i.e. marketing strategies), of Nollywood products have added to what has collectively become the bane of the industry's development and international recognition. (Madichie 2010, Pg. 626)

Such criticisms have not deterred direct-to-video film-makers (such as optical discs) who have continued with their style of hasty film production primarily because a sizeable portion of their target market is still patronising their films. This includes the various language film industries. However, there is a remarkable aspect of Yoruba language film production that marks a notable difference. Yoruba film-makers are known for their collaborative efforts, which help low-cost film productions and subsequently reduce the risk of financial losses in the case of piracy and disappointing sales figures. Most of the producers double as actors and work on films either for free or for very little fee(s) on the productions of other film-makers with the expectation of reciprocation when their own films are being made. As such it is common to see similar faces in several productions. This has also ensured ubiquity of Yoruba films. But, it must be stated that this is not the case with some of the bigger names who are associated with big-budget Yoruba films such as: *Jenifa* and *Arugba.* Even though there have been stories of rifts within the associations and between producers and actors, the level of bond and unity among Yoruba-language film-makers remains stronger than that of English-language film-makers. This bond and cooperation has been one of the major sustaining powers of the Yoruba-language films and has been a major absorber of the tremors of piracy and the downward spiral of DVD and VCD sales that has become an increasing topic of concern to Nollywood stakeholders in recent times.

Screenplay

As with other film industries, once a story has been conceptualised, the next step is the sourcing of funds by the executive producer. Once that has been done, the production process in Nigeria starts with the sourcing of a script, which, in rare cases, is achieved through a script conference comprising of 2 to 6 writers, who are brought together by the producer or the contracted screenwriter. During these conferences the storyline is sequenced and plotted in some cases, but at other times, the script conference takes place after the first draft has been done and only just serves as an evaluative and or 'flesh-up' session(s). Amstel Malta Box Office [AMBO] did script conferences for their productions, and so did Emem Isong for some of her Screenplays. It is difficult to put a price on scripts since screenwriters do not have a base rate script model. The figures vary according to the finances of the producer and the rating or experience of the screenwriter. On average, the payments for scripts range between N50 thousand (about US$350) and N100 thousand (approximately US$700) though the more acclaimed screenwriters earn between N150 thousand (about US$1050) and N300 thousand (US$2100) per script – which is what I was paid for each of the screenplays I did for the Amstel Malta Box Office [AMBO] productions in 2007 (*White Waters*) and 2008 (*Cindy's Notes*). Very few fortunate writers earn between N500 thousand (US$3500) and N1 million (US$7000) for the biggest budget productions. Many producers and directors, including Charles Novia, Emem Isong, Uduak Oguamanam, Vivian Ejike, Kunle Afolayan, Zik Zulu Okafor, and Uche Jombo double as screenwriters, but sometimes contract other writers to do their screenplays. For over 90% of productions, the job of the screenwriter ends once the final draft has been accepted by the producer, except when it becomes inevitable to write additional scenes after shooting has begun. Yet, in many cases, addenda scenes are improvised on location, without the input or knowledge of the screenwriters, who are usually incensed at this approach, but end up powerless since contracts are basically non-existent for about 70% of Nollywood productions. Where contracts exist, the offended party mostly lacks the financial resources or will to pursue legal actions due to the expensive and long judicial process in Nigeria. This is where the Screen Writers' Guild of Nigeria should come in handy. Unfortunately, a lot of writers do not belong to the guild, and the guild itself is perceived as relatively powerless to act on their behalf.

Casting

Producers generally cast films themselves without recourse to a casting agency or a casting professional. Nevertheless, the executive producer (which refers to the financier in Nollywood) often has a say in whom the major actors are; especially when he or she is an Idumota, Onitsha, or Enugu based marketer. There are actors who are regarded as 'sure-bankers', who besides the style of the script are the first attraction to the prospective audience. Open auditions are usually called for the supporting roles, but in some cases, the supporting roles are cast based on recommendations and private audition sessions that are organised by the producer, sometimes with the assistance of the director.

In some instances, the producer contacts the lead actors even before the final draft of the script. However most times, it is after the script has been done and certified ready for production by the producer and or the executive producer that casting begins, even though casting is sometimes done before the scripts are ready; a lot of producers base their scripts on specific actors – usually those regarded as "Stars", such as Ramsey Noah, Inih Edo, Genevieve Nnaji, and Funke Akindele, who are generally believed to guarantee good financial returns. The copycat nature of the industry somehow ensures that the same actors are recycled in various films and their pictures adorn most movie posters and DVD jackets since every producer aims at recovering his investment. This is mostly championed by the Idumota, Alaba, Aba, Asaba, Enugu, and Onitsha-based marketers (many of who double as producers), and this approach to production took a new twist in recent years. Enugu-based film producers/marketers numbering three to five, come into an agreement and pool their financial resources to pay an actor a large sum of money and systematically share the actor's production time between their films. This arrangement is mutually beneficial to the producer and the actor in financial terms. To the producer, it is a smartly deployed investment strategy, which saves a lot of money as an actor that normally earns N500 thousand per production ends up with N1 million for 4 films. To the actor, it an opportunity to make more money within a short space of time in view of the accelerated speed of work on these sets. The cinema and excellence-oriented producer spends far more time on location than the marketer-producer and the actor works longer before earning the same amount of money. However, the implication of the arrangement with the marketer-producer is that the actor moves from one production set to the other without wrapping up on the first before

moving to the other and vice versa – he or she could start with a production set in the morning and end up on an entirely different set in the evening, before returning to the initial set and ending up on a completely different set with a different script and crew, before going elsewhere in a cycle that rarely gives room for the best interpretation of the script and characterisation. But it seems to be working for the marketer-producers who are not trained filmmakers, mostly uneducated, but are set on quick returns on their investments. It is the intuition and quick creative instincts of the Enugu actor that matters in the interpretation of these types of productions, which star actors like Michael Godson, 'Bishop' Umeh Imoh, 'Junior Pope', and Mercy Johnson who was banned from acting in 2013 by the Film & Video Producers and Marketers Association of Nigeria (FVPMAN) for not turning up for productions that had been paid for. The ban was lifted in 2014 (Orenuga 2014, Jakpa 2014). The strength and entertaining value of the script, as well as the famous faces (household names) on the DVD jackets and movie posters is the attraction for the potential audiences who are already fans of the actors involved in these movies.

Pre-Production

The length of pre-production depends on the demands of the script and the budget of the film. It is the producer that sources the funds from investors who are generally credited as the Executive Producers. It is the producer who employs crew and cast members, but in few instances, in relation to the Idumota (now Oshodi), Onitsha, and Enugu marketers – where the Marketer habitually doubles as the producer and executive producer – the executive producer sometimes determines who the Director is, whilst the producer simply co-ordinates. A lot of producers source production locations by themselves and mostly use real houses and locations rather than the rare and unaffordable studio spaces. For productions in which they are unable to source locations from friends and colleagues, the first person usually contacted by the Nollywood producer is the Location Manager, whose main job is to find the required locations and liaise between the owner of the space and the production crew for an agreed fee. The next contact is the Director, then the Lead Actors, Director of Photography or Cinematographer, followed by the Production Manager (PM), who does a combination of jobs like those that should have been done by the line producer and production runner. Sometimes, the reverse is the case, in that the Producer contacts

the Lead Actors before a suitable or available Director is determined. The producer frequently determines and hires the Director of Photography without consulting the Director. Not all directors allow the producers to determine who rolls camera for them. Directors like Izu Ojukwu and very few others always insist on working with their own choice of Director of Photography, or else, they don't accept the job of directing. The Production Manager mostly drafts the Production Schedule which the producer then approves before it is sent out or distributed to cast and crew members. The PM also coordinates the Below-the-Line crewmembers and typically stands as the link between them and the producer.

The Film Production Proper

The production proper usually lasts between 1 to 2 weeks, but a number of productions like Desmond Elliot's *Jump and Pass* shot in one location and most Enugu and Asaba productions have also been completed within 3 to 5 days in most cases partly due to the simultaneous use of two cameramen on their film sets. The crew of a typical Nollywood production is made up of director, producer, production manager, director of photography (who usually does the lighting of the set and doubles as the camera operator), lighting director (not all productions), costumier (sometimes with an assistant), make-up artist, Still Photographer, Gaffer, Continuity Person, Boom Operator/Audio Engineer, Electrical Technician, Best Boys (frequently 2 or 3 in number and sometimes referred to as Pas), Welfare Coordinator (often limited to catering), Location Driver, Location Manager, and in some instances the Personal Assistant to the Producer, who usually holds the cash and cell phones of the producer, while also disbursing petty cash that have been approved by the Producer. Scarcely is there a first aid specialist, and first aid kits are none-existent on most sets.

The production sets for Nollywood productions are largely noisy or sometimes impossible for the director and sound engineer to control since most of the locations are not within studio environments, but in real locations. The President of Speech Pathology and Auditory Association of Nigeria (SPAAN) and Head of Speech Pathology and Audiology Clinic, Department of Special Education, University of Ibadan, Professor Julius A. Ademokoya (cited in Mustapha 2013; Ogunmosunle 2014) described Nigeria as "the loudest noise producer in the world" – His assertion will readily be echoed by the majority of Nigerians, because of regular electrical power

outage, which prompts virtually every household to own a power generating set that produces unbearable noise. Usually, in a block of flats, every household owns a power generator and they all come on simultaneously once there is power outage; the resultant noise is almost deafening and unavoidably infiltrates and interrupts the dialogue and audio ambience of any film shoot. Hence, it became imperative for productions to resort to the use of powerful portable field recording devices such as Fostex Field Memory Recorders, TASCAM DR-60D Linear PCM recorders, and several other brands of audio recording devices, along with various wireless omnidirectional body microphones (attached inside the costume of the actor) that help to filter out the noise created by the generator sets. In a number of instances, the audio recording devices do not succeed in entirely filtering out unwanted noise – a situation which still poses a great deal of challenge to filmmakers.

It is near impossible for a film shoot to go on without the availability of a power generating set on location, and they are available for rent at N3,000 and N4, 000 per day, depending on the power consumption rate of the equipment. Most producers do not hire noiseless generators because of their high cost, which is almost three times that of the noisy ones. Electrical power connection cables as long as 100 meters in length are frequently attached to these generators in order to reduce the effect of the generator noise on the dialogue and overall audio atmosphere of the film. The use of power generating sets has its downsides too. Apart from the noise that could interfere with dialogues and general audio atmosphere of the film, they often malfunction. The other problem associated with the use of power generating sets is the unpredictable high cost of petrol (the fuel type that most of these types of generators use), which escalates during the regular fuel scarcity experienced in Nigeria. Consequently, poor audio remains easily noticeable in Nollywood films including some cinema-tailored films. Like several other academics and critics, Madichie (2010, Pg. 645) again highlights poor audio quality as part of the five primary areas of weakness of Nollywood films.

Films were shot on analogue video cameras and dubbed straight to VHS tapes at the inception of Nollywood in the first quarter of the 1990s. But the second quarter of that decade ushered in the use of higher-end analogue recording video cameras such as Sony's U-matic, after which came the Betacam and Betacam SP camcorders. Editing was done linearly with VTR devices during this period and left little room for the sort of creativity that can be achieved through non-linear editing. Although digital cameras and non-linear editing where used by a handful of industry-leading film-makers before

the close of the 1990s, it was not until the mid-2000s that most Film-makers went fully digital. DSLR cameras are now very popular due to their portability and affordability. Other cameras such as Blackmagic cinema cameras are also very much in use. Producers like Emem Isong, Uche Jombo, Desmond Elliot, and a handful of others have since been using the RED Scarlet cameras, whilst occasionally filming with the RED Epic and Alexia for higher budget productions. Some filmmakers now prefer to shoot with two cameras simultaneously for each scene in order to save time and energy. Uduak Oguamanam's *Jump and Pass* directed by Desmond Elliot employed two cameramen who each operated the same brand of camera (Canon Eos 5d mark iii) for each scene. In April 2014, Zik Zulu Okafor's new television drama series (in post-production) directed by Abey Esho also employed the same two-camera production shooting style (Based on personal observations on these sets). Canon Eos 5d mark iii is presently rented out by production equipment rental companies for N25 thousand (about US$180) per day, while the RED Epic camera accessories are for hire between the price range of N150 thousand and N200 thousand per day.

Post Production and Film approval

For most films, post-production starts as soon as shooting has been completed. Editing of films mostly lasts between two to three weeks depending on the nature of the shoot and the approach of the director. Films that experience sound problems take much longer to edit. Editing software like Adobe Premiere Pro versions, Final cut Pro, and Avid are very popular with editors. The first cut is usually done entirely by the editor, with little or no supervision by the producer or director. It is after the first cut that the director begins to give further instructions towards the final edit of the film. The interesting thing about post-productions in Nollywood is that the director is sometimes completely absent from the editing process due to various reasons. This awkward situation mostly occurs when the production phase encounters bumps and delays that coil into the initial production timelines. Once this happens, the director usually moves on to other pending projects or demands for additional fees/compensation to see the editing through to completion. In many instances, the producer either has no money to pay due to budgetary constraints or is simply reluctant to part with additional funds outside of the budget contingency. There is also the notion amongst some producers that the production process is the core part of the director's job and as long as they have

employed an experienced or capable editor, the absence of the director at post-production is nothing to lose sleep over. Such situations are partly responsible for the visible lapses in the technical directions of many films, given the variance between the director's vision and the editor's approach to the job. However, such lapses are not reflective of all Nollywood films as opined by Sylvanus (2017, p.120-121). The notion that the film director plays no part in the process and outcome of locally made soundtrack is not entirely true. I have been part of diverse productions (direct-to-video and cinema films) of which the directors collaborated in all aspects of the production process. Two examples of the several exceptions are Izu Ojukwu and Amaechi Obi who at times were part of the composition and scoring sessions in music studios and the final editing process for virtually every film they made. The observation made by Sylvanus relates mainly to the majority of, but not all, direct-to-video films.

Also noteworthy is that Soundbooth and other audio cleaning software are a necessity in the post-production phase of Nollywood films given the unique atmospheric nature of Nigeria, which is laden with inconsistent power supply that compels the use of noisy power generating sets. Because Nollywood films are shot on real locations, sound control is virtually unmanageable. It is impossible in most instances to convince occupants of houses around the sets not to use their power generators while shooting is in progress. The result is often an interference of extraneous noise in the audio of a movie scene ensuing in inconsistent ambience. Where and when cleaning software is ineffective, then, the producer may recall the actors for an Audio Dialogue Recording (ADR) session. Recalling lead actors for ADR is usually a very difficult process because of time constraints. They are most often than not busy on other movie sets or have made commitments to other pending film productions, which makes it difficult for the producer to schedule the ADR. This was the case with getting Rita Dominic to do the ADR for *Hide and Seek* (2009), which had very bad audio in some scenes due to the carelessness of the director, Izu Ojukwu, who had the audio listening device to his ear throughout the shoot of the film and failed to notice the electrical interference and other audio deficiencies that were later discovered during editing sessions. The frustrations experienced in treating the audio successfully, mostly compels producers to release films commercially while hoping that the audience will overlook its technical shortcomings.

2. REGULATION

There are various institutional and regulatory bodies setup by the Federal government to oversee the affairs of the film and creative industries over the years. These institutions are primarily industry watchdogs empowered by the government to ensure compliance with national interests whilst engaging in licencing, penalties, and sometimes, training capacities. But due to their short-coming, industry practitioners have made several attempts at self-regulation by setting up various guilds and association to facilitate efficient structure and development as well as protect the interests of their members. In order to understand the intricacies of the industrial structure of Nollywood, it becomes pertinent to discuss the most significant of these regulatory bodies and concepts and their impact on the film industry.

Nigerian Film and Video Censors Board

At the completion of postproduction, the next important step taken by the producer is the censorship of the film. In Nigeria, films cannot be released commercially without the approval of the Nigerian Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB). As Ikpelemo (2017, p.37) notes, film makers have the responsibility of conformity to societal values which requires certain professional ethics that must be adhered to. It is part of the responsibility of the Censors' board to ensure strict adherence of film-makers to such ethics. Thus, once the NFVCB approves a film, it comes with classifications that determine what age group and category of audience the film is suitable for. NFVCB was established by Act No 85 of 1993 and is the singular most important regulatory body in the Nigerian film and Video industry, empowered to assess, classify and register films and video works. Beyond that, the board also has the responsibility of approving and monitoring film outlets across the country. Therefore, NFVCB'S power is felt by both production and exhibition as its sole responsibility extends beyond rating and approval of films for release to granting of licences to film exhibitors. The functions of the board as listed in the Act are:

- To Licence
  (I) a person to exhibit films and video works,
  (ii) a premises for the purposes of exhibiting films and video works:

- To censor films and video works:

- To regulate and prescribe safety precautions to be observed in licensed premises;
- To regulate and control cinematographic exhibitions; and
- To perform such other functions as are necessary or expedient for the full discharge of all or any of the functions conferred on it by this Decree.

Although there is a plurality of film production companies and locations in Nigeria, the NFVCB's authority covers all film and video (including Computer Games) structures across the country. As such, once the editing of a film or video is completed, it is sent to the censors' board for approval and classification, without which no distributor or exhibitor will accept the film since they are also directly under the regulatory authority of the Board, which is also vested with the power to sanction erring organisations that fall under its authority. However, many producers do not bother to censor their films if they are not scheduled for release in cinemas, television, or optical discs. Films released directly to Internet platforms like Youtube and Vimeo are mostly not censored. These online streaming sites are usually self-regulatory and are not pressured by any formal government regulatory bodies. Hundreds of films are not censored every year and are either clandestinely released on Video compact discs or uploaded particularly to YouTube where they could attract hundreds of thousands of viewership for which they receive payment from YouTube. NFVCB has been clamping down on such erring film-makers and marketers, but the majority of them have been able to evade the regulatory body through well planned out means. It is mainly the difficulty in apprehending and punishing such offenders that prompted the NFVCB to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Lagos State Film and Video Censors Board (LSFVCB) in October 2008 in order to sanitize the industry in Lagos state (The Nation 2008). The MOU was for the effective monitoring and enforcement of movie classification and licensing in Lagos state and involved information and data sharing aimed at ensuring full compliance by all industry practitioners through joint preview and censorship of all films within Lagos state. At its expiry in 2013, the executive secretary of LSFVCB, Bamidele Balogun, at a stakeholders meeting in his office disclosed the board's decision to recommence its unilateral censorship and classification of films. His disclosure was less than impressive to film-makers. But LSFVCB proceeded with it. However, the cry that followed this decision and the loophole created by the discontinuity of the agreement prompted NFVCB to initiate the renewal of the MOU

with LSFVCB in October, 2015 (The Champion Newspaper 2015; Njoku 2015). The jointly censored films must carry the seals of both agencies and are be separately monitored, while compliance will be jointly enforced.

The MOU further underlines the importance of Lagos in the scheme of things in Nollywood. It is remarkable that there was friction between the NFVCB and LSFVCB prior to the signing of the first MOU as the National Agency, like most practitioners, viewed the establishment of the Lagos state agency as an unnecessary duplication of its responsibilities, catalyst for confusion, and malevolent burden on film-makers. The LSFVCB was established on August 18, 2004 by the Lagos state government to control and ensure that the content of films made and released mainly in cinemas and optical discs within Lagos state are in conformity with the moral standards of the people of Lagos state. Many industry practitioners are of the opinion that the principal aim of its establishment is revenue generation for Lagos state through various levies it imposes on films by way of censorship and approvals. However, since the task of enforcing compliance to established rules and regulations had become too arduous for the NFVCB, it became paramount to bury the hatchet and cooperate with LSFVCB which had developed its own effective systems of enforcement within Lagos state.

NFVCB remains the overarching regulatory body for the Nigerian film industry and has been able to coerce online movie broadcast organisations such as Irokotv, Ibakatv, and other movie streaming sites with visible offices in Nigeria to obtain certificates of censorship from film-makers before accepting their content for broadcast. The same goes for films that are released and sold to digital television stations like DSTV, which has a range of channels called *Africa Magic*, the majority of which are dedicated solely to Nollywood films. The regulatory body for television and Radio in Nigeria is the Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), but the NFVCB has succeeded in ensuring that every film broadcast on Nigerian television displays its classification icons.

Because of the plurality of film production locations and companies across the nation, NFVCB has offices in six geopolitical zones of Nigeria, such as Lagos (South-West), Onitsha (South-East), Jos (North-Central), Bauchi (North-East), Kano (North-West), and Port Harcourt (South-South). This was not the case in early 1990s when the board had offices in Lagos and Abuja (Headquarters) only. Onitsha was the third office established in early 2000s. The functions of the offices include the collection of various censorship and exhibition-related fees, (see more detail in the chapter dealing with

Marketing and Distribution). These fees are categorised according to the duration of the film or video, the Language of the Film or Video, and the origin of the film (foreign or local) as indicated on the table below. The table is based on the figures visible on the NFVCB website (July 2018) for film and video works. They are in the naira denomination, which is presently at an exchange rate of N362 to US$1.

Table 5. 1 NFVCB Classification Format and Distribution License Fees

Runtime of Films	Nigerian Films in Local Language	Nigerian films in English Language	Foreign Films	Films meant for Public Exhibition
0-15	N10,500	N20,000	N25,000	+30% of applicable fee
16-30	N20,000	N30,000	N40,000	+30% of applicable fee
31-60	N30,000	N40,000	N50,000	+30% of applicable fee
61 – 90	N40,000	N50,000	N60,000	+30% of applicable fee
91 – 120	N45,000	N60,000	N70,000	+30% of applicable fee
121 – 150	N50,000	N70,000	N80,000	+30% of applicable fee
151 – 200	N60,000	N80,000	N90,000	+30% of applicable fee
201 – 300	N75,000	N90,000	N100,000	+30% of applicable fee
More than 300 mins	N85,000	N100,000	N150,000	+30% of applicable fee
Fast Track	+N50,000	+N50,000	+N50,000	+N50,000

TRAILERS REGULATION 26(6)

Classification of Trailer	Nigerian Films in Local language	Nigerian Films in English Language	Foreign Films
Classification of Trailer	N5,000	N7,500	N7,500

MUSICAL VIDEOS REGULATION 5

Category	Musical Video Tracks (Foreign)	Musical Video Tracks (Local)	Musical Videos Films
Censorship and Classification of Musical video	N2,500	N2,000	Censorship and Classification fees as above applicable

OTHERS

Category	Nigerian Films in Local Language	Nigerian films in English Language	Foreign Films	Public Exhibition
Cost of Appeal	N5, 000 application fee + The cost of constituting a review committee.			
Application for Exemption	50% of applicable fee			
Title Change	N10000	N10000	N10000	N10000

As noted in chapter one, in comparison to 1999 to 2010 when the number of classified films exceeded 1000 per year, those of the past seven years (2011 – 2018) have more than halved. According to NFVCB, the criteria used in the censorship of film and video work ensure that the work:

- Has an educational or/entertainment value, apart from promoting Nigerian culture, unity or interest;
- does not undermine national security;
- does not induce or reinforce the corruption of private or public morality;
- does not encourage or glorify violence;
- does not expose the people of African heritage to ridicule or contempt;
- does not encourage illegal or criminal acts;
- does not encourage racial, religious and ethnic discrimination or conflict;
- does not promote blasphemy or obscenity nor depict any matter which is:

  1. Indecent, obscene or likely to be injurious to (public or private) morality or

  2. Likely to incite or encourage public disorder or crime or is undesirable in the public interest.

The NFVCB is not without controversy as it has wielded its authority in ways that have displeased some producers and audiences by banning some films or insisting that important scenes and or actions be cut. The most prominent example is *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the most expensive Nigerian film ever made (production budget is US$10 million) and has been released in cinemas in America, Europe, Asia and Australia. There was public outcry, precipitated by the rumour that the film had been banned before its scheduled release in 2014. The complaints it elicited then prompted Caesar Kagho, the Acting Head of Corporate Affairs of NFVCB to make a statement denying this, but refusing classification until some objectionable scenes have been expunged from film. He further quoted section 36 (1) (b) of NFVCB Enabling Law ACT 1993, CAP N40 LFN 2004, which states that "a decision on a film shall ensure that such a film is not likely to undermine national security" (Vanguard 2014; The Sun 2014).

A film production process is really not complete without the issuance of censorship certificate indicating the classification of the film. NFVCB insists that every poster, DVD or VCd jacket, and visual advertisements of the film must display the classification logo as authorised by the board. This display enables the distributor and exhibitor to distinguish between a censored and an uncensored film. It is after censorship that marketing, publicity and advertisements of the films can commence, leading to the official release to commercial audiences that fall into four different categories (see detailed discourse in chapter 5), ranging from Cinema/Theatre to Internet/Web streaming sites, Home Video audiences (Dvd and Cd sales), and Digital Satellite and Terrestrial Television audiences. This is also the point at which piracy takes its toll on the film.

Nigerian Copyrights Commission

The assertion of all respondents in the interviews conducted for this research is that copyright protection and enforcement is as important as film production. Hence, they should occupy parallel spaces in the development of the industry. Unfortunately, as Aron (Pg. 229) put it "Nigeria has a fairly comprehensive copyrights laws, but enforcement has traditionally been weak". Copyright laws and decrees in Nigeria go as far back as the start of the 1970s with Decree No 61 of 1970, which did not envisage the subsequent abuse of copyrights in the country as enabled by the use of modern technology including the internet and its social media devices that were non-existent at

the time. The inadequacies of the decree which failed to adequately protect copyrights holders and the copyrights-based industry from infringements necessitated the copyright decree No 47 of 1988 (Faturoti 2017, p. 9), leading to the establishment of Nigerian Copyright Council in 1989. The council was vested with the power to protect and enforce all matters on Copyrights in Nigeria. However this did not include the power of legal enforcement, as the activities of the council were limited to the organisation of conferences, workshops and seminars that were aimed at public education. This meant that pirates of intellectual properties capitalized on the loopholes in the Act and continued to illegally reproduce products with their sophisticated channels of distribution. Piracy of foreign and local books was done with impunity and it was easy to notice the products of their criminal acts on the major commercial streets of Nigeria. The popularity of Nollywood from 1992 meant that the pirates immediately extended their activities. Several complaints by affected Copyright owners led to the amendment of Copyright Act (Decree No 47 of 1988) in 1992 with the introduction of section 32A which is now known as Section 38 of Cap C28 laws of Federation of Nigeria, 2004. This amendment empowered the council to go beyond mere administrative functions by appointing copyright inspectors with powers of arrest and prosecution similar to those of the police (Nigerian Copyrights Commission 2014).

Despite these measures, piracy continued to soar with 9 out of every 10 copies of DVDs sold as at 2011 being illegitimate (World Bank Report 2011 cited in Project CT 2015; Moudio 2013; Oxford Business Group 2013) and it is even worse today with the DVD market in Nigeria at the precipice of extinction. Even the change of name from Nigeria Copyright Council (NCC) to Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) in 1996, and the establishment of the National Anti-piracy Committee that included representatives of the Authors' Association of Nigeria and other interest groups, did nothing to mitigate piracy. The NFVCB works hand in hand with the NCC to guarantee that Film and Video works brought to it for censorship have Copyright Notification Certificates issued by the NCC in confirmation of a chain of legal ownership. The fee charged by the NCC for the certificate is approximately US$60 and NFVCB does not proceed with the censorship of any work that has no Copyright Notification Certificate. These gestures have failed to halt the activities of film pirates. Some of them have since broadened their illicit business to the operation of illegal web streaming sites similar to the defunct Megavideo and Movie 2k.

Guilds and Associations

In order to create a common front to cater for the needs of Nollywood practitioners, it became necessary to form guilds and associations that would speak with one voice on behalf of the diverse segments of the Nigerian film industry. It was initially rancorous, but between the late 1990s and the early 2000s the Directors Guild of Nigeria [DGN], Association of Movie Producers [AMP], and Actors Guild of Nigeria [AGN] led the way, largely due to the necessity of finding a voice to stem and form a united front against what they had come to perceive as the highhanded activities of the Marketers Union, which was the most dominant and strident body in Nollywood. They were potent (Haynes and Okome 2000, p.69; Ewuzie 1997, p.8, Novia 2012, p. 37) enough to ban actors that flouted the rules and regulations guiding the modus operandi of production that was set up by the marketers themselves. Their armaments were particularly drawn at actors that did not show up for productions they had been paid for and those whose acting fees were becoming too expensive for the overwhelming majority of the marketers, as was the case with Genevieve Nnanji, Richard Mofe Damijo, Ramsey Noah, Emeka Ike, Nkem Owoh, Jim Iyke and Omotola Jelade Ekehinde in 2005. They even possessed the potency of ostracising producers who questioned or threatened their authority and disparaged them in anyway. The shaping of the associations did not put a stop to this as the marketers managed to break the ranks of these guilds and fractured them. There was an initial distinction between the marketers who handled marketing and distribution only and the producers who handled the production aspects of films, but overtime, some of the marketers began to produce and market by themselves. To further limit the boundaries, some marketers like Ejiofor Ezeanyaeke of OJ Productions began to occasionally direct their films rather than employing a member of the Director's Guild. These actions by the marketers further weakened the guilds.

The guilds were initially like 'lame dogs' that could not bite, until recently, when the financial intervention of the federal government (through provision of grants and loans), private companies (branding and endorsements), and individuals (private investments) made a number of film producers, actors, and directors less dependent on the financial backing of the marketers; thanks to alternative marketing and distribution avenues on the internet, television (especially digital satellite television stations), and foreign markets that are patronised mainly by Africans in the Diaspora, the Caribbean fans, and other fans all over the African continent. For example, Irokotv pays copyrights

owners of films as high as US$10 thousand dollars for the web streaming rights only. I was paid over US$5 thousand for *Hide and Seek* in 2013. Emem Isong and some other film producers usually receive some of the highest copyrights payments for their films. Similarly, DSTV pays about the same amount of money for the broadcast rights on satellite television, which is what they paid me for *Hide and Seek*. This was not the case in the 1990s and mid 2000s when there was no formal internet streaming of films and when satellite television stations paid as little as US$2 thousand dollars for highly rated films. These days, a film producer or copyright owner of the film receives up to US$25 thousand on various internet and television rights alone, which in some cases is the entire some of money spent on the film. However, the marketers' union is still well organised and powerful, but not as influential on other Nollywood bodies as they were in the 1990s and 2000s. In contradiction to the unison that exists in the Marketers Union, there is still rancour and infighting within some of the most visible guilds and associations. A case in point is the Alex Eyengho-led Association of Nollywood Core Producers (ANCOP), which is a faction of AMP (presently led by Zik Zulu Okafor). Several other associations and guilds have since sprung up and a number of them have formed a coalition made up of various national guilds known as Coalition of Nollywood Guilds and Associations (CONGA):

Table 5. 2 Guilds and Associations

COALITION OF NOLLYWOOD GUILDS AND ASSOCIATIONS (CONGA)	
Directors Guild of Nigeria (DGN)	15, Simisola Street, off Olufemi Street, Surulere, Lagos. http://dgn.ng/
Actors Guild of Nigeria (AGN)	17, Ajao Road, Surulere, Lagos.
Creative Designers Guild of Nigeria (CDGN)	www.creativedesignersguildofnigeria.com
Association of Motion Picture and Entertainment Editors of Nigeria (AMPEEN)	http://ampeenng.org/
Screen Writers' Guild of Nigeria (SWGN)	http://screenwritersguildofnigeria.blogspot.com.au/
Association of Movie Producers (AMP)	http://www.westartfrica.com/item/association-of-movie-producers-amp-lagos/
Film/Video Producers & Marketers Association of Nigeria (FVPMAN)	www.nollywoodfilmproducersandmarketers.org

Motion Picture Practitioners Association of Nigeria (MOPPAN)	http://motionpicturepractitioners.blogspot.com.au/
Association of Nigerian Theatre Practitioners (ANTP)	https://www.facebook.com/Association-Of-Nigeria-Theatre-Art-Practitioner-ANTP-409681772464840/
Independent Television Producers Association of Nigeria (ITPAN)	http://itpan.org/
National Association of Nigerian Theatre Art Practitioners (NANTAP)	www.nantapnig.org

There are myriad other guilds and associations that are not part of CONGA and some of them are representative of the various Language film industries. They generally include:

- Filmmakers Association of Nigeria (USA)
- Arewa Film Makers Association
- United Movie Practitioners Association of Nigeria (UMPAN)
- Yoruba Video Film Producers/Marketers Association of Nigeria
- Independent Television Producers' Association of Nigeria (ITPAN)
- Alliance of Nollywood Guilds and Associations (ANOGA)
- Congress of Edo State Movie Practitioners (CEMP)
- Igbo Film Forum (IFF)
- Association of Itsekiri Performing Artistes (AIPA)
- Video Rental Operators Association of Nigeria
- Optical Disc Replicators Association of Nigeria (ODRAN)
- Film/Video Producers Association of Nigeria Onitsha
- Motion Picture Distributors of Nigeria (MOPIDON)
- Yoruba Films Licensed Distributors and Producers Association of Nigeria
- Marketers and Film Producers Cooperative
- Indigenous Movie Makers Association of Nigeria
- The Filmmakers Cooperative of Nigeria (FCN)
- Yoruba Film Translators Guild (YFTG)
- Nigerian Film Festivals and Events (NETNIFFE)

- Media Contents Distributors Association of Nigeria (MCDAN)

MOPICON Bill

The most detailed and ambitious attempt at restructuring the Nigerian film industry since inception of Nollywood is known as MOPICON Bill. It is just as controversial as it is ambitious and has pitched industry practitioners against each other since the proposal surfaced in 2006. The bill was initiated in the 1990s by a group of Nigerian film practitioners who are clamouring for the establishment of Motion Picture Council of Nigeria with the intent of further regulating, administering, and controlling the practice of motion picture and standardizing all facets of the film business in Nigeria, from production to marketing and distribution. As Igwe (2017, p.1386) points out, the expectation is that as a professional body, MOPICON will be for film practitioners what other professional bodies such as Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) for lawyers, Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) for advertising practitioners, and Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) for medical practitioners are to their various disciplines. MOPICON seeks not just to unify the various guilds under one umbrella, but also proposes to coerce every commercial benefactor of the film industry to register with the council and abide by its rules and regulations. It is not yet a bill, but a proposal by these group of industry stakeholders to Lawmakers for consideration as bill for passage into law, but it was quickly greeted with hostility by the majority in the film industry who viewed it as an attempt by few practitioners to gag the process of film production and distribution and take control of the industry for selfish reasons.

The first practical step at introducing the council was the establishment of a Tunde Oloyede-led steering committee by a group of Industry practitioners on April 4th 2005. In November 2006, the committee submitted its report to the Federal Government which consequently set up an Advisory Interim Council towards the institution of the MOPICON, but the committee was never inaugurated due to lack of funds (Ajayi 2016; Izuzu 2016). And so, the proposal went into oblivion to the relief of those against it. However, it resurfaced with renewed vigour about a decade later. At a meeting between Pro-MOPICON Nollywood practitioners and members of Lagos State house of assembly in 2015, the lawmakers – including popular Nollywood actor and director, Desmond Elliot, who was elected into the House of Assembly in 2014 – expressed their

support for the bill and vowed to convince legislators representing Lagos state in the National Assembly to press for the introduction and passage of the bill. The momentum increased with greater prospect of realization when Lai Mohammed, the current Minister of Information and Culture inaugurated the MOPICON draft document review committee in the Conference Hall of the National Arts Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos state on April 12, 2016. The Peace Anyiam Osigwe-led 28-member committee consists of representatives of major Guilds, Associations and related government agencies who were saddled with the responsibility of reviewing and harmonizing the current draft of the bill. They include The Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC), Nigerian Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB), Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, Motion Pictures Practitioners of Nigeria (MOPPAN), Association of Nigerian Theatre Arts Practitioners (ANTP), Film and Video Producers and Marketers Association of Nigeria (FVPMAN), and the various guilds embodying Actors, Directors, and Producers. (Kadiri 2015; Ajayi 2016; Aroture 2016; Dibebi 2016; Izuzu 2016). At the inauguration, the minister acknowledged dissenting voices and vehement clamour against the draft:

> I have heard all the arguments for and against MOPICON. Some have argued that government has no business in helping Nollywood to set up a self-regulatory structure. I want to state here that in line with our overall responsibility for the nation's information, culture and tourism policies, our role in helping to set up MOPICON is simply to enable Nollywood to play meaningful role in national development. One of the ways we think we can tackle frontally the many challenges militating against professional and career fulfilment in the movie industry is to have a central body we can always refer to in decisions aimed at improving and modernizing the motion picture industry. Also, government's interest in the setting up of MOPICON is driven by the fact that we at the supervising ministry need to work with a formidable representative group that is empanelled to lobby for the growth, development and welfare of the industry and its practitioners as well as make for a better organized and more visible and vibrant Nollywood industry. We have no hidden agenda and we will not be part of anything that will stifle the growth of the burgeoning industry. (Mohammed cited in Ajayi 2016; Izuzu 2016)

Although the minister's comment is intended to mollify frayed tempers and provide re-assurance, but many still opine that the exercise will be counterproductive and muzzle creativity in the name of structure. Among them are film scholars and popular film-makers such as Mildred Okwo, Uduak Oguamanam, and Tope Oshin who have publicly expressed their views against the bill, describing it as a clog to creativity and the development of Nollywood. Some further describe as superfluous duplication the functions of existing regulatory bodies. Similarly, former Managing Director of the Nigerian Film Corporation, Professor Hyginus Ekwuazi who chaired the National Technical Committee on the National Film Policy that recommended the establishment of MOPICON no longer considers it a priority. According to him issues such as the "Endowment for Film or the Arts" are more pressing at the moment despite the significance of self-regulation. (Husseini 2016; Izuzu 2016; Sadiq 2016). The disagreement over the impact of the bill escalated into intergenerational conflict as majority of those against it are younger filmmakers who view MOPICON as a draconian agenda by the older generation of film practitioners to take stranglehold of the business of film-making to the disadvantage of new entrants into the industry. There is no doubt that regulation will lead to minimum fees payable to actors, crew, and industry watchdogs which will subsequently make film production more expensive, and perhaps, out of reach of emerging young film-makers who do not have access to the financial clout of the older and more established practitioners. Additionally, preventing untrained practitioners from working will immediately create shortage of labour, particularly in non-specialized crew positions such as Best Boys. Shortage in any aspect of production definitely translates to excess demand for services in that area which will ultimately make acquisition of such services more expensive and inaccessible to low-cost film-makers.

Conversely, a member of the 2006 steering committee and Deputy Co-coordinator of the 2016 draft review committee, Mahmood Ali Balogun, observes that time has overtaken most of the content of the review given the advancement in technology and social media development. As a result, the review will address those changes including the concerns of those against the bill. Correspondingly, Greg Odutayo, a veteran practitioner advised aggrieved persons to make their thoughts and opinions known, noting that the industry cannot be left unregulated. (Odejimi 2016). Other supporters of MOPICON opine that it will establish proper structure and professionalism in the industry and frontally tackle piracy among other seemingly

intractable problems that bedevil Nollywood. Furthermore, compelling everyone involved in the business of film-making at all levels to be members of various guilds under MOPICON will establish sanity as it will put practitioners – legitimate and illegitimate – under the microscope of the council, which will enable it to properly monitor industry activities as well as apprehend and penalize erring individuals and groups. What this means is that piracy could be detected easily and its various well-structured and effective illicit global distribution network could be dismantled. Hence, MOPICON Bill, if ratified by the legislators and becomes law will be nightmare to such persons, who no doubt, must be at the forefront of the fight against the ratification of the Council. Secretary-General of Association of Movie Producers of Nigeria (AMP), Forster Ojehonmon (Personal Communication 2017) surmises the argument of advocates of MOPICON that such structural organization backed by law will significantly fast-track the development of Nollywood when the scourge of copyrights infringement is effectively tackled. But then, it may not be as easy as being anticipated by proponents of this bill given that the pirates themselves are very organized and have been known to infiltrate and compromise the various guilds and Government agents and bodies empowered to wrestle their activities. Such compromises coupled with distrust of the leadership of the various guilds and associations by some of their members are some of the factors responsible for disunity in the guilds. In appealing for stakeholders' support for the establishment of MOPICON, Lai Mohammed further noted disunity as a factor that could scuttle its actualization by adding that,

> I am wondering if I can get that kind of support with the level of disunity in the industry and the prevailing structural deficiency, which have not allowed the industry to speak with one voice. I cannot count the number of petitions I have received either for non-inclusion in this committee or against the idea of MOPICON since I announced the constitution of the review committee. Some have even suggested that we are about to set up another agency that will muzzle creativity and dictate to them the kind of movies to produce. (Mohammed cited in Izuzu 2016)

The industry has not been more divided and vociferous on a singular policy issue as MOPICON has generated. Section 16 of the 2006 proposed bill lists the categories of membership as Associate, Full, and Fellow members respectively. There is emphasis

on professional training as yardstick for acceptance into all three categories of membership. The majority of Nollywood film-makers and distributors have no formal training in screen and media. Some do not have interest in pursuing any form of formal training and engage in the business mainly for pecuniary reasons. Thus, this section of the bill already disqualifies the majority of current practitioners from admittance into the council. Supporters of the Bill applaud it for encouraging education and training related to film and media which will lead to improvement in technical quality of films and professionalism in the administration and distribution of films. The Bill also proposes that no director should engage in more than one film project at a time. Directors, and actors in particular, routinely participate simultaneously in multiple projects for financial gains and regardless of its negative repercussion on the technical and artistic outcome of such films. Many producers have been left financially stranded and psychologically broken by such individuals who are sometimes unapologetic about their actions. I have found myself in similar circumstances in the past when actors, directors, and other crew members did not show up on my production location. The most recent of such personal experience was in 2014 when popular comedian, Bishop Umeh (A.K.A Okon) left me stranded on the set of *Trade by Barter* (final title) after collecting his agreed acting fee from me and went onto two other productions simultaneously. One of them was *Jump and Pass* produced by Uduak Oguamanam whose production schedule was also disrupted by his absence on the days he was required on set. She had threatened to cancel the production of the film of which she told me (personal communication 2014) that the major role assigned to Bishop was specifically written for him. She threatened to never work with him again. But fortunately for her, he agreed to work with her in the daytime and on the other production at night, leaving me with only promises when I caught up with him on the set of *Jump and Pass*, and later, in House 46 Suites Limited in Tafawa Balewa Crescent, off Adeniran Ogunsanya Street, Surulere where he was lodged by producers of the third film. Though, he eventually refunded my money weeks later, the damage was done. I lost far more in monetary and other terms as a result of his action. This is the plight of many film producers and this section of the Bill has the potential to protect producers from such recalcitrant unprofessional attitude.

In order to ensure strict adherence to the statutes of MOPICON, the proposed bill stipulates deterrents against its contravention with strict penalties for persons in breach of its provisions. Anyone found guilty will be liable on conviction to a fine of

100, 000 naira or to imprisonment for a term of two years as specified in subsection 3 of Section 32. In view of the above, one does not require a crystal ball to foresee the amount of contravention that will ensue if some of the perceived harshest sections of the bill are not properly reviewed. Film-making is a means of livelihood for the majority of practitioners who are at wrong end of this bill and tens of thousands of them could be left jobless if their plight is not considered in the review and passage of the bill which has become inevitable with the look of things. Training does not happen overnight and it will be expected that implementation will be a gradual process that will enable the untrained to transit into professionals in their facets of production. Anything less could impel some of those affected negatively into crime. That certainly is not the ripple effect anticipated by proponents of the MOPICON bill.

Lastly, the content of the reviewed bill which was submitted to the Minister by the committee in November 2016 is yet to be publicly disclosed. (Business Today 2016). There are already reports of disparate views among the review committee on who should head of MOPICON between the Draft Review Committee Chair, Peace Anyiam-Osigwe and her deputy, Mahmood Ali-Balogun, amidst reports of power tussle between factions loyal to each of them before and during committee seatings. There are also unconfirmed reports of the rejection of the Bill by the Federal Government. According TNS (2017), although the source of the story has not been verified, Anyiam-Osigwe and Mahmood-Balogun respectively denied knowledge of such developments. Such rumours only give credence to the claim by opponents of the bill that the idea of MOPICON stems from ambition of its advocates to for power-control, monetary gains, and other selfish motives rather than the development of the industry. But whatever motives are, one would only hope that the final outcome of the proposed bill – which has gone quiet again almost a year after the completion of the review – will catalyse strategic development of Nollywood to establish it as one of the leading creative industries in the world.

3. DISTRIBUTION

Distribution in Nigeria is clogged with many difficulties similar in some ways to what exists in the wider African context. The issue of film distribution has long been intractable for African film-makers, particularly since the demise of movie theatres in

the 1980s (Pasley p. 8). Nigerian, and indeed, African film scholars have not ceased to highlight these difficulties that continue to hamper production and distribution of film in Africa. According to Cham (cited in Nyutho 2015, p. 2) "African filmmaking continues to be plagued by the same set of material challenges of meagre or no capital resources, equipment, production, and training facilities and effective distribution and exhibition channels and infrastructures". Amadou Fofana was more detailed in his analysis of the plight of African film-makers. He notes that:

> The financial hurdles faced by African filmmakers underscore the daunting nature of the profession but also point to the filmmakers' resilience. Displaying completed films to the African public also is a perennial problem, as a result, on the one hand, of the fact that most theatres have closed down and on the other, of theatre programmers' preference for Hollywood, Bollywood, and Kung Fu movies, which are said to be more profitable and more entertaining. (Fofana 2011, Pg. 54).

Although more contemporary cinemas have sprung up in the last two decades, but they are still too few to cater for the tens of thousands of digital films being churned out on yearly basis. Nigeria, for instance, had just over 29 movie theatres with approximately 130 screens to cater for a population of almost 200 million people as at 2016 (Offiong 2016). Only few cinema screens have been added since then. Comparatively, within the same period, Australia had 2121 cinema screens of which 1195 are digital screens servicing a population of 24 million people (Screen Australia 2016) and the USA has over 40000 of which 39579 are digital screens in a population of 326 million (National Association of Theatre Owners 2016; Statista 2017). This contrast underscores the extreme shortage of distribution facility in Nigeria and Africa at large. Consequently, the overwhelming number of film-makers are reluctant to up their ante in making cinema suitable films. Instead their energies are targeted at alternative distribution, mainly through optical disc.

In terms of marketing – with exception of few innovative marketing strategies and networks – the various marketing channels and platforms available to Nollywood producers are not much different from what obtains in other film industries across the world such as Television, Radio, and Newspaper adverts as well as social media publicity. Marketing and distribution are entwined in many ways as the latter cannot be

successfully dispersed without the former. My reference to distribution in this treatise will thus be inclusive of marketing, which in Kerrigan's (2017, p. 2) view, is "concerned primarily with how filmmakers and marketers position the film within the mind of consumers in order to encourage consumption of the film". Therefore, this chapter will concentrate on non-theatrical film distribution, release platforms and the processes leading to the commercial release of films in Nigeria and abroad. Suffice to say that the home viewership market was the only revenue-generating option available to film-makers at the resurgence of the industry in the 1990s and this was initially enabled through the sale of home videos on VHS tapes before VCD and DVD became popular at the end of the decade. Although Nigerian films became popular features on terrestrial TV from the mid-1990s onwards, but they did not translate to direct financial benefit to the owners of the film as no cash exchanged hands between the copyright owners and the TV stations. They were primarily trade-by-barter agreements whereby the TV stations acquired the broadcast rights in exchange for approximately 20 advert slots to the film owners, many of who used them to publicize their newest films. These 60 seconds advert slots were broadcast principally in off-peak times and were of far greater benefit to the TV stations who claimed not to have the necessary funds required for the acquisition of the films. Yet, most of them were able to attract paid adverts from organizations – including few blue-chip companies – that were keen to take advantage of the large audience that the films attracted. I had such arrangement with the Nigerian Television Authority in 2003 when my film *Hustlers* was broadcast on a public holiday. Copyright owners no longer engage in such barter arrangements with TV stations and now prefer to have direct financial transactions in exchange for their films. For the audiences, there were two options available for the viewership of Nigerian films at the advent of Nollywood – Home Video and free-to-air TV.

On December 1, 2003, the establishment of Africa Magic channel on South African owned DSTV created additional revenue generating stream for Nigerian film-makers, which opened windows of opportunity for them to vend the TV rights of their films to DSTV in tangible financial transactions. Many Nollywood practitioners, mostly individual producers, still complained that the amount of money paid for the acquisition of their films by the satellite TV station was a reap-off, but the disconsolate economic condition in the country meant that most film-makers were desperate for additional income. Popular Nollywood actor and president of the Actors Guild of Nigeria, Emeka Ike has been at the frontline of complaints and petitions against

DSTV's alleged exploitation of Nollywood (Emeka Ike, cited in Ebere 2008; The Whistler 2016; Scan News 2016; Nigeria Films.Com 2017). The big beneficiaries of such content acquisition at the time were the prolific film-makers, mainly the marketers/distributors, who had hundreds of old films at their disposal. The aggregate amount paid for their films ran into tens of thousands of dollars. To date DSTV remains a very good alternative or additional revenue generating stream for film-makers at all levels, providing lifeline for those who have difficulty recouping their investment from the traditional optical disc market and movie theatres. Nollywood films now make up over half of Africa Movie Channel content, primarily due to the size of Nigeria as the most populous country in Africa and Nollywood's highly impressive global audience base. DSTV started the Africa Magic channel in South Africa in July 2003 and now has 8 African Movie Channels, namely Africa Movie Showcase – DStv channel 151, Africa Movie Epic – DStv channel 152, Africa Movie Urban – DStv channel 153, Africa Movie Family – DStv channel 154, Africa Movie World, DStv channel 155, Africa Movie Hausa – DStv channel 156, Africa Movie Yoruba – DStv channel 157, Africa Movie Igbo – DStv channel 159. It pays between US$2500 to US$5000 (is was paid US$5000 for Hide & Seek in 2013) for most films and very few have received between US$6000 and US$10000. Such acquisitions give the channel the entitlement to air the film for 12 months of which it has the exclusive rights for 6 months. However, unlike Irokotv which pays the copyrights owner or the representative of the copyrights entity immediately an agreement modalities have been concluded for a film, DSTV pays three months after the conclusion of such modalities. The reason for the delay in payment is not very clear to most producers. The modalities for the acceptance of a film by DSTV start with the submission of the preview copy of the film in a hard drive. Once the film has been previewed and accepted, then the cable rights are negotiated between the owner and the representative of DSTV, during which the payment sum is agreed. The film is then submitted to DSTV in its broadcast format which is similar to the technical specifications of Irokotv.

It must be noted that the additional revenue stream enabled by DSTV did not inspire any major transformation in the structure of the Nigerian film industry. Instead, many, including Emeka Ike (Scan News 2016), contend that its acquisition policy gradually led to the stagnation of optical disc sales. Marketers, film distributors, and film-makers including Emem Isong and Uduak Oguamanam lament that the DVD market is now comatose. Yet the predicament of the DVD market cannot be ascribed

to DSTV alone as the entrant of online digital distribution company Irokotv in 2010 further compounded the woe of the DVD market. Irokotv offers higher and instant payment options to copyrights owners, who in contrast, are made to wait for three months to get paid by DSTV. This inducement was irresistible for film-makers who are keen on instant recoup of part or all their investment. Consequently, many films were released simultaneously on Optical Disc and Irokotv, but gradually, DVD sales started to decline even faster as audiences now had access to more Nollywood films at far cheaper rates through monthly or quarterly subscription on either or both DSTV and Irokotv. So, the need to stack up Optical Discs at home became superfluous. It is notable that VCDs still sell in decent quantities through patronage by the lower rung of the society who cannot afford subscription TV or Internet costs, but are keen to see new films. Moreover, VCDs are far cheaper than DVDs today and many film lovers in these category do not mind paying between 50 and 150 naira for a new film rather than paying a monthly subscription of between 5000 and 9000 naira for DSTV and nothing less than 500 naira plus fast Internet costs of over 10,000 naira for online streaming of films. The impact of DSTV and various online streaming sites such as Irokotv on Nollywood is viewed with mixed feelings by film-makers, depending on the side of the coin that each person belongs. For the younger and upcoming film-makers with difficult access to the optical discs distribution market and movie theatres, the alternatives offered by these digital content distribution companies are career boosters. But for those whose livelihood are hinged on optical discs distribution, particularly the marketers and distributors at Alaba, Oshodi, Onitsha, Aba, and Kano who hitherto collectively made millions of dollars through various optical discs distribution networks, their entrant into the Nollywood film distribution space has had a negative toll on the industry.

Today, the various means of generating funds from films in Nigeria have increased and now fall into 4 broad categories: Theatre or Cinema screening, Home Video entertainment, Online Streaming, and Broadcast/Ancillary. Of the four categories, cinema remains the safest way to make money without easily falling prey to piracy. Yet, it proves to be the most difficult to access for over 90% of producers because of the dearth of Movie Theatre halls. But then, television and internet rights of Nollywood films do not fetch more than US$50 thousand (see chapter 5 for more detail) altogether for the best rated productions. Like DSTV, Irokotv sometimes pays as little as US$2000 for films. Nevertheless, with good and strategic publicity, cinema screening could be profitable before DVD releases are done, because it is at this latter

stage that pirates are most active at mass-producing and selling fake copies of these films to audiences through their sophisticated global distribution network. On the other hand, a film such as Desmond Elliot's *Apaye*, which is one of the big budget mainstream Nollywood films shot with a Red scarlet camera on a budget of about US$125 thousand (over 20 million naira) would feel less of the effect of the sting of piracy due to lesser financial risk put into its production. It is noteworthy that piracy practices are widespread, even beyond the shores of Africa. Industry practitioners blame the festering of piracy solely on the unwillingness of the federal government to take decisive action against the perpetrators. Many emphasize that pirates are not ghosts and some of them have been identified over the years, but nothing significant has been done by way of legal and legislative procedures to halt their activities.

Though, DSTV has dominated my discuss of the benefit of TV broadcast to Nollywood, it is essential to state that there are other satellite and terrestrial TV stations that acquire television broadcast rights of Nigerian films. Star Time's Africa Movie Channels (AMC) is one of a few that provide an additional means of revenue to most films whose exclusive rights sale to DSTV has expired. It acquires broadcast rights at US$1000 per film. The others are way off the mark. AIT now pays 100,000 ($600) naira per film with the rights to air it for 1 year. Etv Africa pays $500, and WETV pays $300. Most of these other TV channels are only able to acquire much older films at the stated sums.

Internet/Online Broadcast

As earlier mentioned, internet broadcast has since become a veritable source of revenue for many Nollywood producers. The major online broadcast organisations are Youtube, Netflix, Vimeo, Ibakatv, and Irokotv. In January 2016, Netflix announced at the 2016 Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Vegas that it has become available in 130 countries including Nigeria (Adeleke 2016, Osamuyi 2016). This will enable it to leverage on the growing demand for Nigerian films across the globe. It already has a number of Nollywood films in its library of content and many film practitioners are keen to have additional streams of revenue and competition in the online broadcast options. But Netflix's Nollywood content remains nothing compared to Irokotv, which was established in September 2011 as the major part of the broader business of Iroko partners. Irokotv is so far the most proactive to film-makers because of its wider global

Nollywood audience base. It is also the only organisation that pays film owners immediately a broadcast agreement has been reached. Moreover, unlike Netflix which does not accept films from individual film owners, but deals only with aggregators or established agents, Irokotv communicates directly with copyrights owners and their representatives. Its influence in the industry has also become monopolistic because of its financial power. In 2013 it raised a total fund of US$27 million from existing partner Tiger Global, Sweden based Investment Company Kinnevik AB, and US-based Rise Capital. This was further boosted in 2016 by the injection of additional funds totalling $19 million by French premium cable television channel Canal+ and existing partner Tiger Global. The additional funding now enables Iroko to produces its own films.

Below is an example of the technical specification required by Irokotv for films submitted for online broadcast by film owners. It is similar to the technical requirement of DSTV for TV and online broadcast.

Table 5. 3 Irokotv Technical Specifications

IROKOTV TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS FOR NOLLYWOOD MOVIES
2. **The master copy of the movie file delivered by producers in Apple Pro Res 422 (HQ) 1920 x 1080 .The benefit of this is that it retains the high quality and can then be converted to other codecs. This is really important for any movies with TV or inflight rights. –MOV FORMAT**
3. **Movie covers supplied in 1920 x 1080 high res graphic.**
4. **Movie trailer in Apple Prores 422 (HQ) 1920 x 1080. Duration between 3 to 5 minutes.**
5. **FIVE images of main cast members and at least 5 images taken on set in high res 1920 x 1080 px. Digital copies please. (Behind the scenes pictures/Location Pictures)**
5. Where possible, we will also require the script or transcript of the movie.

Based on technical specifications requested by Irokotv for ***Trade by Barter***

Smart phones have become a veritable part of online movie experiences with incontrovertible optimistic and expansive future anticipated on that distribution platform. Movie apps for mobile devices have become a universal trend that facilitates audio-visual entertainment experience on-the-go and Nollywood is not an exception in spite of the many challenges bedevilling the use of these apps in Africa. Films can be watched, streamed, and downloaded on these apps which support various mobile platforms and operating systems. Android users for instance are able to download them from Google play store while some of the streaming sites enable users of other versions of mobile operating systems that are not available in Google play store to download the apps from their websites. Many of the online streaming sites are available for PC, Android and IOS, thereby allowing movie experiences on mobile phones, iPads, and personal computers. There is a variety of streaming sites with functioning apps available to users. They include DSTV, Irokotv, Afrinolly, Nollyland, Video Moja, Ibakatv, Nollywood Full Movies, Nollywood Best Movies, Tubi TV, Nigeria Movies Now, Ghallywood Ghana Movies, Okiki App, Yoruba Nigeria Movies, Premium Nigerian Movies, Naija Tube, Nigerian Christian Movies, and Naija Hub, Nollywood Movies Hub. Other Web Apps include: TV Nolly, Nigeria Movie Network, RealNollyTV, NaijaOnPoint, and NetNaija, all providing diverse and unique viewing experiences based on the quality of each app.

The primary snag to the use of movie apps on smart phone devices in Nigeria as is the case with most African countries is expensive data connectivity and slow internet speeds which can ruin the fun of seamless streaming. The amount of data required to stream on the apps is out of reach for the vast majority given the expensive data connectivity required, while those with the financial clout to acquire the necessary data are often confronted with interruptions and buffering resulting from slow internet speed. To avoid such frustration many download the films to their mobile devices when and where there is seamless connectivity and watch offline later. Thus, the comfort, uniqueness, and flexibility provided by the use of movie apps creates additional streams of revenue to online streaming sites of Nigerian films and has been vital in capturing the audience that has difficulty watching films at home due to busy schedules or other reasons.

CASE STUDY: MY EXPERIMENTAL FILMS

In the course of writing this thesis, is embarked on a five-production experiment between 2014 and 2015 to further ascertain the viability of low-cost film production that is devoid of the exhibition (cinema) and optical discs release streams. Both release channels involve a lot of arduous work for the producer in different ways: cinema release is very competitive and requires a lot of marketing and publicity to attract cinema goers to a film because of the usually impressive line-up of Hollywood, and sometimes Bollywood, blockbusters, as well as other Nollywood films in exhibition across Nigerian movie theatres. Publicity cannot be left in the hands of the cinema film distributor alone. Many of them engage in simultaneous distribution of multiple films. Moreover, cinema films usually require a world premiere to create preliminary awareness of the film and craft some sort of awe around it with the objective of whetting the appetite of film lovers. All these are strenuous and expensive to realise. That is besides the usually long waiting periods leading to the final exhibition of a film, which may be up to a year. Only a handful of Nollywood film-makers possess the imperturbability obligatory for such venture. The majority want quick returns on their investment, particularly when several films, including three of the most expensive and well publicized films in the history of the Nigerian film industry, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Doctor Bello*, and *93 Days*, have been known to flop at the cinemas. As for optical disc distribution, which by far, guarantees quicker returns as a result of the two to three-week turnover period the DVD and VCD markets are synonymous with, there is the problem of slow sales these days. But the greater reluctance for most film-makers is due to a lack of trust. Antecedents show that dishonesty is rife among optical disc film distributors and only a handful can be trusted. Therefore, the only distribution options left are online streaming companies and TV stations. The reason is that the processes of release are more transparent and straight-forward since they are based on direct negotiation and remittances of agreed emoluments to film owners. In ideal circumstances, the only effort made by the copyright owner is censorship of the film, negotiation with the acquisition entity, and submission of the original copy of the film in Apple Pro res format. Apart from the provision of a three-minute trailer, in some cases, and a poster design, the hassle of publicity is mainly left to the acquisition party, relieving the owner of the headache related to the amount of sales or profit made in the

final analysis. It appears to be a roller-coaster style of film business for low budget film-makers. Hence, my curiosity and foray into this experiment.

I shot *Stuck Between, Trade by Barter, Trapped (In), The Hook,* and *Deadly Ransom* on very low budgets of between 1.5 and 1.8 million naira respectively (less than US$8000 in all instances). I was the writer, producer, director, and chief editor of all five films, which enabled me to cut off a huge chunk of budgets that could have been as high as four million naira (approximately US$17000). There is a lot of multi-tasking involved in such low-cost film production. Of the five films, only one is yet to be released and there is a lot of lesson to take away from this experiment. *Trade by Barter* and *Trapped In* were accepted for broadcast by Irokotv and DSTV, but Irokotv did not accept the rest for different reasons. *Stuck Between* was rejected because it is a sequel (continuation of) to *Hide & Seek*, the first film I sold to them in 2013 – I am not sure of why that was a problem because DSTV accepted it. *The Hook* and *Deadly Ransom* were rejected because their thematic concerns were similar to those of a couple of films in their repertoire. Their rejection of these films and DSTV's procurement of the rights underlines the necessity and value of multiple revenue streams to Nollywood. Making films specifically for these two channels is always a risky venture for film-makers given that many have had their films rejected by both platforms and lost thousands of dollars as a result. Besides rejection, there are other bumps experienced by film-makers. Irokotv, for instance, has the tendency to break their promises to film-makers after negotiations have been concluded and prior to the agreements being signed. In one of such instances in July 2015, I agreed on an acquisition fee of US$6000 dollars with Irokotv in finalisation of negotiations and was then requested to treat some portions of the audio of the film prior to submission. The onerous process took a little over a month to complete, but unfortunately, they changed their mind about the negotiated fee and paid half of the negotiated sum. The reason advanced for their change of mind is that they were, at that time, overwhelmed with film submissions and had to renegotiate copyrights procurement fees in order to accommodate as many films as possible. I was desperate due to debts accrued in completing the film, and so, I accepted the offer in spite of the high quality of the film which received one of the best reviews of the year from Irokotv subscribers and other Nollywood film critics, with Kemi Filani (October 2015), a blogger, describing it as "the most beautiful movie I have seen this year" and Akinola Oluwaseun Esther (2015) referring to it as "the best Nigerian movie I have seen this year". What such capitalist approach portends is the devaluation of films by

Irokotv due to surplus content submissions by film-makers who are reliant on the site for returns on their investment. Even more worrisome for such film-makers is that Irokotv is gradually tending towards self-sufficiency in content production through its in-house production unit called ROK Studios, which enables it to bypass costly content licencing. The CEO, Jason Njoku (Cited in Ajene 2017) reveals that Irokotv is keen on making over 200 of its own films per year in the future.

Although I made average net profit of US$4000 from each of the films sold to Irokotv and DSTV collectively – or respectively, in some cases- my experiment shows that it is a risky venture that could so easily backfire when a film is made specifically for them regardless of how technically adept that film is. My experience with Irokotv reveals that the originality of the story is as important as the technical impute, and even that is difficult to foresee, as coincidence could lead two film productions, that are completely independent of each other, to having similar storylines or thematic concerns.

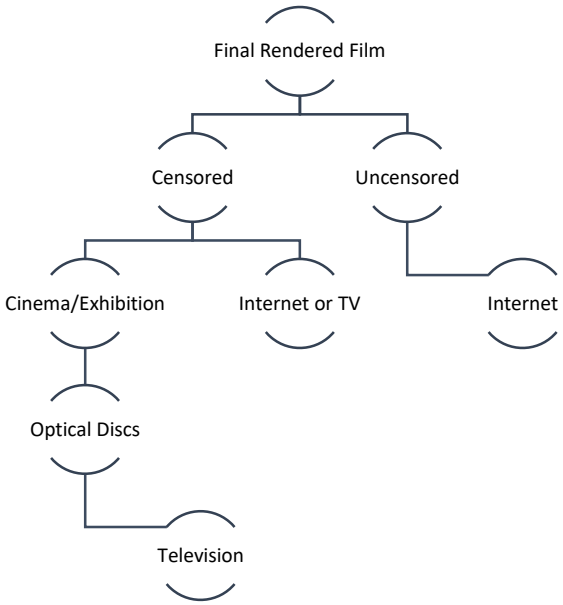
4. EXHIBITION

Pasley (2011, Pg. 7) noted that "many Nollywood films have instead followed the Hollywood formula and are purely business propositions, some of whose directors profess to be businessmen first and that they are aimed at a particular audience". Few industry practitioners, if any, will repudiate Pasley's deduction that Nollywood films are commercially driven. The ultimate aim of over 95% of Nollywood film-makers is good returns on investment. The amount of profit made is inextricably tied to the marketing and distribution strategy employed to realize the targeted profit. These strategies on the other hand are dependent on the budget of each film. Although Nollywood still maintains the low cost and high volume production proclivity through which it gained international recognition, there has been an emergence of expensively produced films on celluloid and costly digital cameras over the years. The most expensive Nigerian film to date is Biyi Bandele's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, an adaptation of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel of same title, which cost approximately US$10 million dollars; roughly 1.6 billion naira (Fisher 2014; Wilson 2014). The closest to it in cost and clout is Jeta Amata's *Black Gold*, which reportedly cost US$4 million; over 600 million naira. Both films deliberately featured international (Hollywood) casts that included the Oscar-nominated Chiwetel Ejiofor, Thandie Newton, and Hakeem Kae

Kasim. These are Hollywood-Nollywood co-productions that hinged their estimated budget recoup on international audiences and sales. Both films were directed by Nigerians and had most of their budgets sourced from Nigerian investors. The film budgets are huge by Nollywood standard and required far more concerted efforts by the producers for profit to be realized through the usual distribution network. Thus, the marketing strategies employed by film-makers for commercial films vary from one channel of release to the other. They include Cinema, DVD, VCD, and Online Streaming/Video on Demand (VOD). There is also the Mobile cinema platform and other innovative release platforms that are driven by product branding and corporate sponsorship. The cost of marketing depends on which of these platforms the marketer chooses to release a film on. Films made by Kunle Afolayan and Emem Isong amongst others often exploit all the major channels of release. The majority of films in Nigeria skip the cinema release and have been released straight to VCD first and then Online streaming and sale of television rights to both free-to-air and satellite stations. This has been the norm since VCDs replaced video tapes in the late 1990s. There is little or no cost attached to the sale of rights to online streaming organizations and television stations. As a result, some producers ignore cinema and optical discs release channels altogether due to cost of replication and mass production of discs and other marketing related essentials such as printing of jackets and posters. Four of my films, *Hide & Seek, Trade by Barter, Trapped In*, and *The Hook*, have been commercially released on Irokotv (Online streaming) and African Magic Channel on DSTV (Satellite TV) between 2013 and 2016. None of them have so far exploited the exhibition or optical disc options because of my avoidance of the stress, bureaucracy, and costs related to the traditional release channels at the times of release. I made between 60% and 200% profit from the films. For some of such films, the costs of production are very low and could be recouped from the sale of these rights. For other film-makers, the concentration is on other non-traditional channels of recouping their investments. It should be noted that no film can be released on video discs and movie theatres without the involvement of a licensed distributor in Nigeria. Distribution licensing is the responsibility of NFVCB and the registration fee is 10,000 naira for community license, which restricts distribution by the license holder to a particular community only, 100,000 naira for regional license, which includes the communities in that region, and excludes communities outside of that region (the regions are South-West, Northern, South-East, South-South, Middle belt), and 250 thousand naira for a National License,

which covers all the communities and regions in Nigeria. Before NFVCB made registration compulsory for companies and enterprises involved in the exhibition and distribution of films in Nigeria it was an all-comers affair and yielded very little or no revenue for the government. The initiation of the licenses created order and streamlined marketing, exhibition, and distribution in the film business. Besides, film distributors in Idumota, Aba, and Onitsha doubled as marketers and there was hardly any distinction between both as they were generally referred to as 'Marketers'. Most independent producers do not have distribution licenses and for their films to be eligible for commercial release, it becomes compulsory to channel their sales process through one of the licensed distributors.

Figure 5.2



Structure/Hierarchy of Commercial Film Release

Theatrical Exhibition

Once production has been completed on most big budget films (10 million naira and above), the next step is the censorship and classification process, which costs between 25000 and 60000 naira for feature length films. NFVCB charges 60000 naira for feature films and insists on films being registered with NCC before rating is done. Once the entire censorship process has been completed, the cinema is usually the first channel of commercial release and this can only be directed through a licensed cinema distribution

company. Cinemas now mostly accept films and trailers on Digital Cinema Package (DCP). There are five major licensed companies that specialize in the distribution of films to movie theatres in Nigeria (both indigenous and foreign films) and they include Silverbird Film Distribution Company (a subsidiary of Silverbird Group), FilmOne Distribution Company (owned by Film House Cinemas Limited), Genesis Cinemas (owned by the Genesis Group) Twenty Ten Media Limited, and Blue Pictures Distribution. The profit sharing formula between film owners in Nigeria is such that a distributor gets a non-negotiable distribution fee, which is 10% of the profit of the film and separate from the percentage that they receive from the total box office revenue. The distributor's share of the revenue is not fixed and differs from one production to the other. In the first week the box office revenue is shared equally at 50% apiece between the producer and the distributor. In the second week, it is shared at a percentage of 60 to 40 in favour of the distributor. After the second week, it becomes 65% to 35% also in favour of the cinemas. It should be noted that revenue sharing comes after the deduction of various taxes that amount to 20%. Of these, 10% is withholding Tax, 5% VAT, and 5% Entertainment tax, which is levied by Lagos state government for all films screened in the cinemas that are located in the state only. The producer is responsible for the supply of big banners that are hanged in cinemas across Nigeria, while the distributor's job includes facilitating the delivery of copies of the films to all the movie theatres in the country, as well as making sure that the banners are sent to the cinemas for display. The cost of these banners and other publicity costs are borne almost entirely by the production company and this is displeasing to most of them. However, various distribution companies offer various incentives to film owners in other to entice them.

Silverbird Film Distribution Limited, the first of these film distribution companies, which was established in 2004, monopolized the distribution of films to movie theatres in Nigeria for five years. This left the film owners with no alternative and many had to abide by some of the harsh conditions presented to them in order to have their films released in cinemas across the country. But the recent proliferation of licenses granted by the NFVCB has given producers the option of choosing between distributors and going for the one that best serves their interest. In an interview with the former Managing Director of Royal Arts academy, Uduak Oguamanam in December 2014, she recounted how at the Africa International Film Festival (AFRIFF) in Calabar, Cross River state, the producer of *Gone Too Far* was approached by Film House cinema

and for the distribution of the film and she chose the former over the latter. The availability of options has become a beacon of light to many film owners, many of whom still crave for more options and more movie theatres as the available ones are still too few in comparison to the overwhelming number of films that have been denied cinema space as a result. The advantage that the Silverbird Film Distribution Company Limited has is that it gives free adverts through the Silverbird television and radio stations as part of its package deal to film owners. But what doesn't go down well with the film owners is that the distribution company does not share the marketing cost with the producer. Any publicity and other costs outside of the Silverbird radio and television is completely borne by the owner of the film. Therefore, profit sharing does not include the marketing and publicity cost incurred by the production companies and many films that have been screened in movie theatres did not recoup their investments. Lucky Geo Olisakwe (Personal Conversation), an Alaba-based Film producer and marketer who shoots straight to DVD films berated the cinema distributors for insisting that the film owner should be solely responsible for publicity. He claims that it made it impossible for most of the films to record box office gains because of the additional costs incurred in the process. On the contrary, Film House Cinema Limited has no television or radio stations of its own, but its FilmOne distribution company shares the cost of marketing with the film owner. Hence, the cost of distribution is taken out before the profit is shared (i.e. the cost of logistics, publicity and administration). No other distribution company offers this largesse, which has drawn major producers to the company given that it is a huge burden lifted off the shoulders of the film owners. However, Film One Distribution does not contribute in financial terms to the marketing cost prior to the screening of these films, but its involvement is at the profit sharing stage where the film owner is given back 50% of the cost incurred in the marketing of the film. The niche provided by FilmOne has led to its distributing some of the most popular big budget Nollywood films like *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *October 1*.

Uduak Oguamanam, whose films have been screened at the movie theatres over the years, further revealed in the course of my interview with her that films that have been to the cinema do better in DVD because of the publicity and popularity generated in the course of promoting them for the cinemas and the word-of-mouth information spread by those who were at the cinema to see them. Moreover, there are very few cinema screens in comparison to the number of films competing for cinema screening times as most of the movie theatres have less than 5 screening rooms. As a result, it

takes a number of months to secure screening date and time for a film. Less than 5% of films made every week are approved for screening by the distribution companies and are consequently perceived by Nollywood audiences as very high quality film. Although film distributors always watch preview copies of films to decide if they meet up with the standard of films that they want, but there are exceptional instances of producers and film companies such as the Royal Arts Academy who do not stay on the approval queue before their films are screened. This is because a relationship has been built over the years with the movie theatres that have come to trust their judgment to make films that are nothing short of the standard suited for cinemas. Oguamanam opined that Nigerian movies do better in cinemas between September and October when a good percentage of the Hollywood blockbusters have already been screened for the year. Her assertion is based on the advice given to her by her film distributor to wait till September or October for the screening of a film she was set to release in March of 2013. On the contrary a number of new wave Nollywood films such as Robert Peter's *30 Days in Atlanta* and *A Trip to Jamaica*, and Kemi Adetiba's *The Wedding Party* have recorded better box office revenues than highly rated Hollywood blockbuster that ran parallel to their release in the last three years.

One of the ways that film owners and distributors spinoff publicity around their films is through movie premieres that are held in prime locations like the Silverbird Galleria in Victoria Island, Lagos state and Uyo in Akwa Ibom state. In addition to this or sometimes separately done is the "Meet and Greet" session that is organized to create awareness about the film. For this session the theatre management in agreement with the production company organizes for the A-Graded actors in the film to take over from the sales persons at the ticketing counter and sell tickets to customers who have come to see other films. This is often carefully arranged to make sure that there is no disruption or negative effect on the box office sales of tickets to the films currently showing at the cinemas. For example, very famous actors such as Majid Mitchel, Tonto Dike, and Ramsey Noah who starred in *Champaign* will sell tickets to those who have come to see other films that are screening at the movie theatre and in the process create an awareness about *Champaign* in the course of conversing with the customers who are mostly very surprised and elated to meet them. This strategy has proved to be very successful in the promotion of films like *Apaye, Champaign,* and *Jump and Pass*. Nevertheless, the difficult part of this strategy is getting the actors to find the time to be at the Meet and Greet session because of their usually very busy schedules.

Non-Theatrical Exhibition

A plethora of scholarly work has been done on non-theatrical exhibition and distribution of films in Nigeria and how the direct-to-video film distribution model has opened a new horizon of opportunity for Nollywood films in global spheres. In his description of this model, Lobato notes that:

> Nigerian video has ushered in a new and innovative film culture, based around cheap and accessible nontheatrical distribution rather than theatrical release; it has, in effect, solved many of the distribution problems that plague filmmakers across the globe. This article explores the potential transferability of this release template to other film industries. (Lobato 2010, Pg. 5)

Nigerian video film-makers continue to be innovative in their revenue generation drive, particularly in regards to optical disc releases since the advent of Video on Demand online alternative distributors and Nigerian movie content acquisition by Satellite TV stations. The entrant of these alternative film distribution platforms has in some ways further led to decline in sale of DVDs. Although more Nigerian films are receiving greater attention from movie theatres, their number remains miniscule compared to other distribution platforms including mobile cinema, Internet/Online broadcast, and TV (Satellite), and Optical Disc (DVD and VCD).

Nigerian movie theatres are still re-evolving, still infinitesimal for the potential market size, and less than half of the over 300 theatres that existed in the country as at mid-1980s. This has resulted in non-access for many film-makers as well as depriving most film enthusiast's access to cinema films due to proximity barriers. It is similar to the situation in some Anglophone and Francophone African countries, mainly those of West Africa, such as Senegal, Mali, Benin Republic, Niger, and Burkina Faso. According to Fofana (2011, Pg. 55) "This cinema remained essentially an urban phenomenon given the absence, for the most part, of basic screening facilities in rural communities in the said countries". For this reason some production companies have resorted to alternative marketing and distribution strategies that are different from the Movie theatre option. One of such production companies in Nigeria is Mainframe Film

and Television Productions, which is owned by Tunde Kelani, a multiple award winning director. The company's films are targeted at large screen projections. This strategy is similar to the mobile cinema projects of the Yoruba travelling theatres of the 1970s and 1980s, as well as those of the Francophone countries noted by Fofana:

> For example, in order to reach out to people in rural areas, FESPACO's "Unité Mobile de Projection" (Mobile Projection Unit) would occasionally tour rural Burkina Faso screening films, while Panafrikimage, a Senegalese association of cinema professionals, would periodically screen films outdoors in the suburbs of Dakar, in Gorée Island, and in the interior regions of Senegal. Currently, in Benin, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali, a more aggressive organization known as the Cinéma Numérique Ambulant (CNA), or Mobile Digital Cinema, an association that could rightly be called "friends of African cinema," has undertaken "cinefication" projects,10 which bring movies to places where they had never been seen before.11 With the professed intention of entertaining the rural populations with African films, CNA has been screening movies in the rural areas of Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger since 2001. (Fofana, Pg. 55)

The mainframe mobile cinema project was launched in 2000 when there were no standard cinemas in operation in Nigeria. The company uses mobile cinema truck(s) to take its films on the road with the aim of reaching people, especially in areas that cinema halls are either unavailable or inaccessible. This initiative, which is in partnership with the Lagos State government, has the primary task of taking the films not only to urban areas but also to rural and difficult to reach parts of Lagos state. The mobile cinema project has also gone outside Lagos state to places like Abuja and Akwa-Ibom state in partnership with United Nations International Children's Emergency Funds (UNICEF). The main thrust of the partnership is that the messages that UNICEF and or Lagos state government is eager to pass across to either all or a segment of the audience is inserted into these popular films that people are eager to see. Adverts are sometimes played just before the films start and in the middle of the films in order to make sure that every audience member sees the sponsors' message(s). The initiative is also similar to what the British colonial government did in its various colonies across West Africa in the 1900s. It was such that government propaganda and important health-related

communiqué and other messages were played during public screening of films sponsored by the government. An example of the mobile cinema project is the screening of Tunde Kelani's *Arugba* in all the 57 local government councils of Lagos state in 2009. Another example is the humorous social satire, *Yeepa*, a Yoruba-language adaptation of Femi Osofisan's1978 play: *Who's Afraid of Tai Solarin?* (Adaptation of Nikolai Gogol's 1836 novel *The Government Inspector*), which was screened in January and February of 2015 in all the local government councils of Lagos state. There are far more audiences at the road shows than in conventional movie theatres because they have corporate or government sponsorship that enable the viewing public to see the films free of charge.

CONCLUSION

The discourse of the industrial structure of Nollywood in this chapter is a holistic treatise of the structural dynamics of the Nigerian film industry. The purpose has been to ensure an informed knowledge of the various governing, organizational, and creative units as well as their functionalities, shortcoming, and efficacy on the development of Nollywood. I made in-depth analysis of the process of film-making at various levels of film production, including cinema and direct-to-video films, whilst citing my experimental exploration of the financial possibilities of alternative revenue generation streams such as online streaming/V.O.D. and television broadcast rights. The objective was to highlight the unique production environments and methods prevalent in Nollywood, and in some instances, at variance with film-making norms elsewhere. The broader context of film-making and consumption in Africa was briefly put into perspective to underline the scale of similarity of structures and structural defects, and on an eclectic scale, factors extenuating against film distribution and their historical antecedents.

A broader discourse of direct-to-video films and the economic challenges that encapsulate them was deliberately omitted from this chapter because it should be approached on its own merit due to its sheer magnitude. Direct-to-video films remain extensively more prolific than the aggregate of the other distribution streams in Nigeria put together and is an egregious epitome of the overwhelming volume of Nollywood films, with structures that differ from those of cinema, TV, and internet/V.O.D productions. Their production and distribution approach are in some ways interesting,

but at times inconceivable and worrisome. It is essential to highlight their unique attributes and what makes them different, particularly from economic standpoints, and why they remain popular despite their inadequacies. The next chapter, therefore, will include budgetary breakdown of marketing and distribution potpourri of direct-to-video films, the impact of piracy, and the ways film-makers and distributors in this category cope with financial deficits of floundering films during and after commercial releases.

6. ECONOMIC CHALLENGES OF DIRECT-TO-VIDEO FILM

INTRODUCTION

Over 75% of Nollywood films are released direct-to-video in the form of DVD or VCD as the first phase of commercial release. This is largely due to the unavailability of cinema screening space and the fact that cinema time is usually booked out for the year as a result of the very high volume of films that are made in Nigeria. Besides, most producers do not have the patience to wait for several months before recouping their investments. This is because of the pressure from investors who are eager to return a profit within three to six months of investing in a film. Madichie describes the situation:

> within a fortnight the movie is ready and the businessman investor gets the master tape, which is then sent out to any of numerous mass-dubbing centres across the country in readiness for mass production and subsequent distribution. The movies are normally copied unto video compact discs (VCD) and widely distributed and viewed across the developing world. However, the sustainability of this modus operandi is another matter entirely (Madichie 2010, Pg. 627).

Direct-to-video (i.e. optical discs) sales provide the immediate opportunity for monies to be recouped quickly and this usually happens within the first 2 or 3 weeks of release. The DVD market is different from the VCD market. VCD film release is far more popular than DVD film release because of the margin of costs involved, which is 30 naira (approximately US$2) in most cases. DVDs are usually one-part films, while VCDs can sometimes be as many as 6 parts released at the same time. The cheaper costs of VCD releases make the risk involved far lower and more comfortable for the marketers. The other reason for the preference of VCD over DVD is that unlike the ubiquitous VCD replicating and mastering machine, the DVD replicating machine is not readily available to the marketers. Again, most households that patronize them have no DVD players. Nevertheless, some producers and marketers release their films in both the DVD and VCD formats in order to reach both the high-end and the lower rung of the society. An example is *Ije,* which was released on both formats after a successful run of cinema screenings across Nigeria at the end of which it generated over 57 million naira at the box office in 2010 (The Sun 2014). There are four different phases of

making a movie disc ready for commercial release. These phases vary from graphic designs for the disc cover and jackets or jewel box covers, to the replication of discs and printing of posters, banners and other print publicity materials.

The first step at releasing a DVD film is the graphic design(s). The cost of Graphic designs includes poster designs and jacket or cover designs, which varies from 50,000 naira to 180,000 naira (US$312 – US$1125), depending on how many parts the film has been divided into and the level of experience or clout of the graphic designer. Printing is done by different printing companies. The 2 types of DVDs used are DVD 5 and DVD 9. DVD 5 is a single layer of 4.7GB (90 minutes of video), which does not give the option of separating special features and trailers from the film; each one of them plays into the other. Whereas DVD 9, a dual layer disc of about 160 minutes of video, which holds up to 8.5GB, provides an options menu that separates trailers and special features from the main film and allows the audience to choose if they want to see them or not. DVD 5 costs 45 naira (US28 cents) and DVD 9 is 50 naira (US31 cents) which is inclusive of printing and mastering. The difference in the cost of printing is because the technology involved in making DVD 9 is not readily available in Nigeria. Hence, most printers send them abroad for mastering. An example is *Jump and Pass* which was mastered in Dubai by Transerve Nigeria Limited in 2014. The prices can be lower if a significant number of copies are ordered (10,000 copies and above) and it could be more if the number of copies is less than 5000. The amount quoted is for the disc and the print on the disc. Posters and Jackets are usually printed by different printing companies, most of whom have their specialties. The majority of producers print about 5000 posters for a start and print more if required after the initial copies have been sold out. Each poster costs 12 to 15 naira (US7 cents to US9 cents) and the jackets cost 5 to 7 naira (US3 cents to US4 cents) each. Five thousand posters will amount to 60,000 naira (US$375) only, while 10,000 jackets will amount to 25,000 naira (US$156.25). The cost of printing also depends on the relationship that has been built over the years between a producer and the printer, as well as the current exchange rate of the dollar to the naira which is necessitated by the importation of some of the materials used in printing. A producer that makes a lot of films will almost certainly get bargains from printers who are keen on printing the producer's next job. For such printing jobs, the cost reduces to about 5 naira for the Jacket and 12 naira for the poster. The total cost of packaging each copy of DVD film for commercial release is

approximately 50 naira (US31 cents) for DVD 5 which is the most common type and 55 naira (US34 cents) for DVD 9.

The wholesale price of a film also depends on whom the film is being sold to. There are marketers who demand for the DVD and the cover paper without the Jewel boxes (the plastic package cover), because they engage in the production or importation of Jewel Boxes as part of their broader businesses and would rather use their own boxes in order to save costs. For such people, the wholesale prices are minus the cost of the Jewel box. There are many others that demand for the full package of the film (including the Jewel box) and such marketers pay for the full wholesale price of the film. The retail price of a film is also not uniformed and could range between 400 and 500 naira (US$2.5 and US$3.12). It should be noted that some individual marketers and distributors also do not have a fixed price on all their films. An example is The Royal Arts Academy whose films were sold at wholesale prices of 250 naira (US$1.56) until 2014 when the price was increased to 300 naira (US$1.87). However, there are still exceptions, as was the case with *Jump and Pass*, which the producer, Uduak Oguamanam, insisted should be sold at 250 naira. The larger percentage of Nollywood films are sold at a retail price of 500 naira, but some films retail for less (between 400 naira and 450 naira). Like most retail shops, most films at Afriville restaurant have fixed prices of N500, except few of them that are sold at 450 naira (US$2.81) because of the insistence of the distributor or the owner of the film that their film should be sold lower than the general retail prices of films. Their insistence is borne mainly out of the desire to make them affordable, with the hope that affordability will result in more sales.

In the last four years there has been drastic shift from the DVD format with over 75% of Nollywood films on optical discs now released straight to VCD. A VCD normally costs 18 naira (US11 cents) to make, but it is currently 19 naira (US12 cents) because of the high exchange rate of the dollar to the naira. The wholesale price per copy of VCD is currently at a uniform price of 50 naira maximum, which is far lower than the going price of 150 naira (US94 cents) that it sold for in the late 2000s. The main idea behind this drastic price reduction is the fight against piracy. Most pirated VCDs cost about 50 naira per copy or a little over and was a thriving market for movie lovers who could not afford the original copies. This led to massive decline in the sale of films. In order to stem this trend and discourage movie lovers from buying pirated films, it became necessary to reduce the wholesale prices to a competitive amount. Uduak Oguamanam explains that virtually all the films in this category were initially

sold at the usual wholesale price of 150 naira, but the prices were reduced to 50 naira each after two to three months of commercial market release, because that is the period in which brazen piracy is at its worst. In other words, filmmakers and distributors have three months of grace to recoup their investment and possibly make profit or lose the rest of the sales to piracy. The 2 to 3 month time-frame she mentioned is not necessarily the way it always is, as some blatant pirates get to work much earlier. That was the case with *Half of a Yellow Sun,* on which pirates swooped before it started to screen in Nigerian cinemas. Its gross revenue at the box office was a meagre 60 million naira (approximately US$375 thousand dollars) in 2014 and ended up as a commercial failure despite its record Nollywood film budget of over US$10 million (1.6 billion naira). The third highest grossing film in Nigerian box office history, *30 days in Atlanta,* was lucky to be the spared by pirates during cinema screenings, but was not so lucky immediately after as pirated copies of the film littered the streets before it could be formally released on DVD or VCD (Ohai 2015, Vanguard 2015). The marketers' adoption of the price reduction strategy after 3 months was very rewarding and satisfactory until its weakness came to the fore when movie lovers started to ignore the 500 naira and 200 naira retailed films from this category of marketers. Audiences realized the norm of prices dropping to a meagre 50 naira after 3 months and most of them decided that was the best time to buy. This meant that little or no profit was made by the marketers as a result. Subsequent upon that, the marketers re-strategized and began to sell at a release price of 50 naira. But the remarkable difference is that the films now come in 4 to 6 parts. What this means is that a 2, 3 or 4 hour film that should have come as a complete movie is now divided into 4 to 6 places and sold at 50 naira per part. Hence, that movie ultimately sells between 200 and 300 naira when all 4 or 6 parts are sold. Each part ends with a cliff-hanger that is similar to television serial episodes or soap operas.

The packaging of VCDs is cheaper and inferior to those of DVDs which are sold at 350 naira (US$2.19). Jewel boxes are considered too expensive and paper jackets are used instead, with the cost of making each copy totalling 5 naira. This is a typical example of Low-cost, high volume filmmaking and the affordability enabled by the low cost of VCD films in some cases has led to very high volume of sales for popular films. An example of a very successful VCD sale is *Dumebi the Dirty Girl,* the comedy film starring Mercy Johnson, which sold over a million copies. The end result is that the marketer and owner P Collins Productions made over 15 million naira

(US$100,000) from the sale of this film after the production cost had been taken out. The successes of these films are based on bulk sales.

The difference between the DVD market and the VCD market is not in terms of the location of the market, but in terms of the social and economic class of the target audience. Production companies that have exhausted the cinema and other exhibition screening options often sell the copyrights of such films to marketers that specialize on the distribution of VCDs. The copyright is sold at 10 naira per copy which does not include the jackets. The marketers bear the cost of printing jackets and VCDs after purchasing the VCD marketing right from the owner of the film. According to Uduak Oguamanam, The Royal Arts Academy sometimes sells the VCD marketing rights of its films to interested distributors and was paid 10 naira per copy for the VCD marketing right of *Reloaded*, which sold 100 thousand copies.

Also noteworthy is that films which have been released and whose sales have slowed down or become stagnated are sometimes sold at incredibly reduced prices in order to dispose of them and possibly recoup the cost of production. Such sales are generally referred to as "Oil" or "Carnival". This secondary market is mostly in the form of VCDs and it is a process in which such films are sold at give-away prices that enables them to clear their stock. Oil prices range between 17 to 20 naira per copy of film at wholesale prices that are determined by the owner of each film. This is usually the last marketing option to salvage the investment in the film and the success of this last resort is based on bulk sales.

DISTRIBUTION NETWORK OF HOME VIDEO FILMS

It is imperative to understand the original motive of film-makers and marketers in the foundation of Nollywood film consumption in the 1990s in order to comprehend the structural make-up and economics of the distribution model as it exists today. As Karrigan (2017, p. 4) notes, in contrast to the US and South Korean distribution models which are anchored on dissemination of the local to the global, Nigerian video films where developed primarily for the substantial domestic market. Idumota, Onitsha and Aba were the sole hubs of film distribution in Nigeria, but that has since changed as places like Jos, Kaduna, Abuja, Kano, Port Harcourt, Benin, and Warri have now become very important markets for those desiring to spread their distribution network across the country. The major film market remains in Lagos state and Idumota market

was the major hub of film distribution, but the nefarious activities of street urchins known as area boys soon developed into a misfortune to the film business. They became a nuisance to film marketers in that axis and particularly molested and extorted their customers. Also, the occasional gunfights between rival gangs regularly stalled business activities and negatively impacted the film market and distribution businesses. As a result, the film marketers relocated to the Trade Fair Complex along the Lagos-Badagry express way in 2000, leaving only the Yoruba film marketers and other retailers in Idumota. However, the business environment at the trade fair complex did not fare much better and their stay was short-lived largely due to power tussle within the marketers association which ensued in business disruptions and threats to life. Hence, some of the film marketers went back to Idumota, while others went to Alaba International Market. But those that went back to Idumota soon realized that there was safe haven in Alaba and therefore relocated again to Alaba International market where they have all remained since 2002. The Yoruba film marketers remained in Idumota twelve years after their Igbo colleagues had left, but the volatile environment did not abate, and so, in 2014 the entire film market in that part of Lagos state was relocated to Oshodi with the assistance of the state government.

Most marketers and distributors do not have offices in some of the film markets which are now spread across the country. McCall (2004, Pg. 105) describes the largely informal characteristics of the business, noting the "amalgam of patronage, territorial claims and customary bribery" that typifies the trade. But then, in order to monitor the sale of their films, they often contract someone within each market to watch over their films. Sometimes, it is the same person or organization that represents the distributor in all the markets when such a person or group has branches in all the major markets. For instance, Royal Arts Academy has contacts in the various film markets. This contact has the sole rights to the film in that market. One of such markets is the infamous Alaba film market where the contact person registers the film on behalf of the distributor with the payment of 15,000 naira to the marketers association, which then gives him or her the sole rights to that film in that market and ensures that no other person or group of persons does wholesale distribution of the film except this representative that the producer or marketers of the film have given the nod to. The same procedure applies in Onitsha, Aba, and other locations. Everyone in each of these markets buys from the distributor's representative. The 15,000 naira marketing registration fee mentioned above is paid by the distributor of the film and not this contact person. The prime

responsibility of the contact person is to keep an eye on the sale and activities around the film to ensure that piracy, if any, is at the barest minimum. The benefit to the representative is that he or she receives a negotiated commission on each copy of optical disc sold in that market. The distributor of the film sells copies of the film to customers outside of these major film markets. Most distributors do not have representatives outside Nigeria and as a result, most, if not all the films sold outside Nigeria is pirated, including language films, as pirates have become more daring with alarming impunity. And it easy to see why piracy remains active considering the informality of the business in spite of the recent government interventions. In Nigeria, similar to Schultz's observation (2017, p. 170) of much of Africa where the most common markets remain informal, with informal structures and unsurprising informal agreements that incorporate the distribution of the legitimate, quasi-legitimate and Illegitimate or infringing products. Nevertheless, the concerns are not limited to piracy alone as online streaming and TV broadcast of films have contributed in their own ways to the low sales of movie optical discs. As a result, many producers are no longer keen on marketing and distributing their films on DVDs and VCDs and are just content with selling the rights of their films to online streaming companies such as Irokotv, Ibakatv and satellite and local TV stations. Films no longer sell anywhere near 500 thousand copies as was the case with *Living in Bondage* and other films that revamped Nollywood. Any film that sells as much as 10 thousand copies these days is regarded as a major feat. Major Nollywood producers and Marketers, Emem Isong, Uduak Oguamanam, and Desmond Elliot affirmed to me in separate meetings that the sale of DVDs and VCDs have deteriorated to the extent that most film marketers have been counting losses rather than profits in the period of 2014 to date. In an attempt to release *Hide and Seek* on DVD in 2015, I approached Emem Isong who had requested to market and distribute the film on DVD under the platform of Royal Arts Academy in 2014. She declined and explained to me that a lot had changed within one year and the DVD market was no longer viable. I approached other marketers who affirmed Emem's assertions.

Like the gamut of scholarly writers highlighting the phenomenon of Nollywood abroad, one of the leading scholars on Nigerian films, Haynes (2011, Pg. 72) profoundly describes Nollywood films as "wildly popular" in Africa and African Diasporic communities. These include non-English-speaking countries. Jedlowski (2017) and Temidayo (2017) note the economic benefit of Francophone African countries

including cote d'voire, Cameroon, Congo, and Gabon to Nollywood. Temidayo succinctly describes this phenomenon:

> Some African countries love Nigerian films due to their dramatic intrigues. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigerian films dubbed in Lingala, are a great show in their national television programs. In Cameroon and Gabon, Nigerian films, dubbed in French, are integrated into African cinemas to entertain the respective citizens, French being the official language, is an instrument of domestication to develop the national identities of these countries. Through dubbing techniques in French, sequences of Nigerian cinematographic events are conceivable to the Francophone receptor audience culture. (Temidayo 2017, p. 28)

Thus the acquisition of DVD rights by film distributors in diasporic communities was an additional source of revenue that helped to mitigate the biting effect of piracy on copyrights owners. Legitimate marketers in the United States of America, for instance, used to procure rights to distribute DVDs for between US$3000 and US$5000, but when online streaming and VOD companies like Irokotv and Ibakatv ventured into the Nollywood film business, most people now preferred to pay US$5 per month or US$15 per quarter to watch several films that are being hosted on these streaming sites as it is far more economical than buying a copy of DVD disc at US$5. As a result, the sale of DVD copies of the films declined and most of the distributors stopped buying the rights. But despite not paying for the copyright of the films, many of them still sell these films to customers who are keen on having their own copies of the films. An example within Australia are African shops in Footscray, Melbourne that sell pirated copies of films for as low as AU$2 to people who are still keen on owning a copy of the film and other films that are not available for online streaming.

Given that some people are still eager to own copies of these films for diverse reasons, Irokotv also spread its business horizon into the distribution of DVD and VCD copies of films using South Africa as a launching pad in 2013, but it failed to make profit as the South African market was already flooded with "10 in1" copies that sold for US$3 which was by far more economical to Nigerian film lovers than the same amount being charged by Irokotv for one film. Irokotv closed that aspect of its business in 2014. Because of the very close proximity of Ghana to Nigeria, the Ghanaian market

was the most thriving and profitable market for Nollywood films outside Nigeria until 2010. Emem Isong's film *Guilty Pleasures and Reloaded* sold over 100 thousand copies in Ghana during this period. But that has since changed as the weak Ghanaian indigenous film industry went through restructuring that led to its development and somehow redirected the interest of the Ghanaian film audiences to their home-grown films. They now prefer their own films to Nigerian films. Most Nigerian films do not sell more than 5000 copies in Ghana these days. Uduak Oguamanan noted that Nigerian films no longer do well in Ghana cinemas. The other problem that Nigerian marketers had with Ghanaian marketers who are interested in very popular Nigerian films is that they offer to buy each copy at 80 naira, which makes no business sense to the Nigerian marketer. This is because the Ghanaian marketer does not bear the cost of printing jackets and DVDs, which altogether costs 50 naira. The implication is that the distributor is gaining only 20 naira (US12 cents) per copy which is a far cry from the 200 naira profit gained from the wholesale price of DVD in Nigeria. The wholesale price of films in Nigeria ranges between 250 to 350 naira, depending on the producer and popularity of each film. It is an open market and the owner of the film, which in most cases is the producer, makes the decision on how much a film is sold. Moreover, because of the very close proximity of Ghana to Nigeria (a little over 1 hour from Accra to Lagos by flight) there is the fear that the Ghanaian marketers could import the same films into Nigeria and gain undue advantage by flooding the Nigerian film market with the films at prices that are far lower than the wholesale price of 250 naira. Lack of proper distribution and marketing structure has been a major drawback in the distribution of films in Nigeria. To date, the retail distribution system is such that anyone sells Nollywood films anywhere without being answerable to anybody. This is what breeds piracy and makes the collation of accurate data on the number of films and the amount of profit made from each film impossible. Barnard and Tuomi (2008, Pg. 6) revealed the negative effect of tangible formal structures in their pursuit of accurate data for their research on Nollywood. They state that "because of the absence of government regulation or a credible industry association in Nigeria, we relied on evidence and estimates from organizations like the World Bank and the Economist for the Nigerian data". Most of the channels of retail sales are unregistered and the owners use street shops, make-shift retail stands at the roadside, wheelbarrows rolled from street to street, mini bus or tricycle distribution across strategic locations (usually bus stops), street hawkers and those that sell to motorists and passengers along major traffic

congestion routes. Pirated copies of films are not limited to, but are common, among retailers with no fixed business addresses. This is because the mobile nature of their trade makes it easy for swift evasion of apprehension by the police and government taskforce when anti-piracy raids and agency clampdown is happening. Moreover, the Nigerian Copyright Act LFN 2004, Cap C28 section 18 (1) states that an individual that is involved in the production or manufacture of infringing copy of work in which copyright subsists is liable for a conviction to pay a maximum of 1000 naira (US$6.25) for every copy made or to a term of imprisonment not exceeding five years or to both the fine and imprisonment. Section 18 (2) states that an individual that sells a cinematograph film or lets such infringing copy for hire is liable to pay 100 naira (US62 cents) for every copy dealt with or to a maximum term of 6 months imprisonment or to both the fine and the imprisonment. Therefore, a retailer who is apprehended with 50 pirated copies of a film is liable to pay a meagre 5000 naira (US$31.25) only, which does not serve as serious deterrent to such a person. In Lagos alone, it is easy to count well over 3000 hawkers retailing pirated films in the streets and traffic congestions on motorways in a day.

The vacuum created by the lack of structure in the distribution of Nollywood films is what pirates have been feasting on with 90% of the total copies of films unaccounted for. This anomaly was given a positive attention in December 2013 with the establishment of G-Media, which received a loan of 1.8 billion naira (US$10 million) from the Bank of Industry (BOI) to establish distribution chains that include cinema, rentals, pay-per-view, video-on-demand, premiere and sale of optical discs within and outside Nigeria. The funding given to Gabosky Films Incorporated is from the US$200 million allotted from the US$500 million grant given to BOI by the African Development Bank (AFDB) for the overhaul and enhancement of the industrial and entertainment sectors in Nigeria. The first phase of the project was in January 2014 with the establishment of 25 ultra-modern stores all over the country, 4000 community distribution stores and 30 regional distributors overseeing the network. The idea is to create an organized and controlled database for the entire distribution network which will connect content owners, licensed content managers, content distributors and consumers to stored information on the industry and its content distribution. The database application software known as Gabosky Films Media Distribution and Management Software (MDMS) is a cross-platform, web-based design for Nollywood film distribution. The G-Media distribution model was launched in Lagos state several

months later in September 2014 and it included the introduction of G-Media online streaming portal for movie and music downloads with complete Digital Restriction Management (DRM) protection. The ultimate aim of G-Media is to curtail piracy to the barest minimum and improve producers' profitability whilst ensuring a controlled and auditable distribution process that is far-reaching. Ironically, some of the most daring infringements of movie copyrights were witnessed after the inauguration of G-media and particularly to films distributed on DVDs by the company, such as those mentioned in earlier paragraphs.

Nollywood stakeholders are hoping that the initiative will eventually stem piracy, but I think that the mark is still far off. My assertion is based on the continued presence of film hawkers, vendors, and improvised retail stands on urban and rural streets all over Nigeria and the fact that not all of them retail phony copies of films. As such, it is difficult to immediately identify who is selling pirated copies. Hence, banning the sale of films in places with no registered address and outside of a fixed building may be a proactive way to begin dealing with the intractable problem as part of the fight against piracy. Mere public announcements and information dissemination advising movie lovers not to purchase fake copies of films as has been done in the past have proved ineffective. Those who cannot afford films like *October 1* and *30 Days in Atlanta* at the retail price of 500 naira (US$3.12) often ignored such pleas from film owners, thereby patronizing the much cheaper pirated ones for as low as 150 naira (US94 cents). Consequently, the continued existence of street vendors means continued patronage of pirated films. It might then be justifiable to conclude that until the distribution structure in Nigeria is purged of street vendors and other makeshift optical discs retail stands, G-Media's objective of a controlled and auditable distribution structure will continue to meet with setbacks. It is more so because G-Media is just one out of several distribution companies and the majority of them transact businesses with wholesale customers only, and therefore, have no control over retail sales, which as is noted earlier, is the stage at which counterfeit copies become visible in the communities. Most of the wholesale customers are supermarkets, grocery shops, and optical discs and entertainment stores that sell the films in retail quantities to movie lovers. But the other group of customers depends on street vendors and other mobile sales strategies for rapid retailing of the films. Such people are unlikely to support the elimination of street hawkers. Hence, the more realistic approach to eradicating piracy within Nigeria will be an innovative solution that includes mobile street vendors in a

genius way. As for copies sold outside the country, due to financial constraints most producers do not bother to pursue or experiment with agents and distributors in most African and Caribbean countries where there is huge interest in Nollywood. This is where G-Media could make an impact and increase profitability for producers.

PUBLICITY

The publicity strategies employed by marketers vary from Posters and Handbills to the print media such as newspapers and magazines. The electronic media remains very important, but more significant to the marketers is the insertion of trailers and adverts into other marketers' films. The way it works is that marketers exchange adverts that run on each other's films. Therefore, when a film is ready for commercial release, some marketers place their film adverts or trailers in that film. Subsequently, these adverts and trailers are played at the start of that movie disc. Conversely, the magnanimity of that marketer is then repaid by these other marketers who are now under obligation to insert that marketer's adverts or trailers at the beginning of their own films. No money exchanges hands in these trade by barter transactions. These exchange situations are better valued by the marketers than paid television adverts. The explanation for this is that there is no time-frame involved as is the case with television and radio adverts, which run only a specific number of adverts within the specific period of time the payment covers. Besides, the erratic power supply in Nigeria also guarantees that not all the targeted audience will see or hear the television and radio adverts as there may be no electric power supplies available to enable them spot the adverts when they run on the electronic media. But that is not the case with adverts that have been inserted in the films which might have an almost infinite lifeline depending the level of care the owner gives to it; they will always be seen whenever and wherever the film is played. This is more so with films that are popular and have gone far and wide. Adverts that have been placed on popular or very well anticipated films receive a lot of publicity because thousands of people get to see them as a result of their popularity. These films usually have about three film adverts and trailers inserted at the beginning. Most of the marketers are usually very careful to choose the films that they exchange adverts with. Trade by barter transactions whereby free-to-air television stations gave specific number of standard advert slots in exchange for the broadcast rights of films for up to one year was common place between marketers or producers and television stations

between the mid-1990s and late 2000s. Such agreements meant that a film could receive between 20 to 30 slots of 60 seconds adverts that could have cost over a million naira depending on the clout of the producer or marketer. Daar communications Ltd owners of African Independent Television (AIT) and Ray Power FM took advantage of such arrangements to broadcast Nollywood films on daily basis as they seemed to strike a bargain that would otherwise have been very difficult to procure. So did the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Silverbird Television (STV), Lagos Television (LTV), Television Continental (TVC) and several other television stations across the country. Agreements like this have become a rare occurrence as the filmmakers and marketers gradually began to desist from them, largely due to the perception that the television stations are benefitting far more from it than the owners of the films. Most of the filmmakers now prefer to pay for the adverts. Moreover, the social media now provides a new platform for films to be publicized. Facebook and YouTube are the most common online publicity platforms used by filmmakers.

THE IMPACT OF PIRACY ON FILM DISTRIBUTION

It is noteworthy that piracy practices pertaining to Nollywood are widespread, even beyond the shores of Africa. Industry practitioners blame the festering of piracy solely on the unwillingness of the federal government to take decisive action against the perpetrators. Many emphasize that pirates are not ghosts and some of them have been identified over the years, but nothing significant has been done by way of legal and legislative procedures to halt their activities. Muoh (2017, p. 28) notes the importance of Intellectual property law and a proactive government (Nigerian) policy approach to safeguarding Nollywood's economic value. Similarly, in their discourse of Rational Choice Theory (RCT) Cornish and Clarke (cited in Tade and Mmahi 2017, p.3.) explain the goal-oriented nature of felonious offenders who act based on cautious consideration of the potential cost and benefit of their criminal action. In the case of Nigeria, Tade and Mmahi add that the benefit of piracy far outweighs the cost. Consequently, over 90% of DVDs and VCDs sold in Nigeria and abroad are counterfeits. A Kenyan film scholar Nyutho (2015, Pg. 10) observes that "Nigerian films dominate the Kenyan entertainment scene both in the many hours of airing on broadcast television and pirated DVDs copies that are sold by hawkers cheaply to Kenyan consumers in most urban

areas". Television and Internet rights of Nollywood films do not fetch more than US$50 thousand (see chapter 5 for more detail) altogether for the best rated productions. Like DSTV, Irokotv sometimes pays as little as US$2000 for new films. Nevertheless, with good and strategic publicity, cinema screening could be profitable before DVD releases are done, because it is at this latter stage that pirates are most active at mass-producing and selling counterfeit copies of these films to audiences through their sophisticated global distribution network. On the other hand, a film like Desmond Elliot's *Apaye*, which is one of the big budget mainstream Nollywood films shot with a Red scarlet camera on a budget of about US$125 thousand (over 20 million naira) would feel less of the effect of the sting of piracy due to lesser financial risk put into its production. According to World Bank Report 2011, out of every 10 DVDs of Nollywood films sold, 9 are illegitimate copies (cited in Project CT 2015; Moudio 2013; Oxford Business Group 2013). Piracy has taken Nollywood films far and wide and is largely responsible for spreading the films to virtually every country outside Nigeria by means of illicit distribution networks. In Brooklyn, USA – which has been described as having the highest number of Nollywood audiences outside of Africa, with the fan-base made up mainly of African immigrants, African-Americans, and people from the Caribbean – the Attorney General, Charles J. Hynes, led an official raid on nine shops from stores along Church, Nostrand and Flatbush Avenues, and Cortelyou Road where more than 10 thousand copies of counterfeit Nollywood DVDs were seized in 2010 (Fahim 2010). This illicit practice is still common in spite of the raids and counter-reaction by concerned authorities. A more recent practice by these crooks is that films that have been released on the internet through legitimate means, but are yet to be dubbed on DVD or VCD are being sold by pirates. For most film owners, it remains a mystery how these pirates gain access to their films and subsequently mass produce them on optical discs for commercial distribution. This new trend quickly evaporates any hope of the film-maker making profit from these films. A personal example is my film *Trade by Barter* (2015) to which only Irokotv and DSTV have the broadcast rights and which I have not even finalised the optical disc distribution with any marketer, but is now being sold online at US$10 by Hydara Fabrics in the United States and with a phony title, *Horny Goat*. Many other producers have similar experiences to mine.

Nigerian audiences over the years have come to accept piracy as part of the culture. A generation of Nigerians (especially from mid-1980s) were born at a time when pirated products littered the streets of Lagos, Kano, and virtually every other state

in the country without any significant attempt by government officials to curtail it. Piracy in Nigeria predates Nollywood. The abuse of copyrighted products started growing in the 1970s, with counterfeited books, music, and various foreign films presented as original. Hollywood blockbuster films, Indian films, and diverse genre of music were particularly counterfeited and available to consumers in commercial quantities in the 1980s and people were happy to buy them for home entertainment. Brian Larkin relates his viewing experience of a foreign film in Nigeria:

> One Jean Van Damme film is watched had Chinese subtitles superimposed over Arabic ones, providing a visible inscription of the route of media piracy. Frequently U.S. videos contain a message scrolling across the bottom of the film every few minutes stating: "Demo tape only. Not for rental or sale. If you have rented or purchased this cassette, call 1-800- NO COPYS (1-800-662-6787). Federal law provides severe civil laws and penalties for unauthorized duplication or distribution" (Larkin 2004, p. 296).

The irony of this observation is that while many consumers do not realize that the copies of the products they have bought are counterfeited, due to financial constraints, many more simply have an apathy towards piracy and do not care about the negative effect on producers. In the late 1980s into 2000s it was commonplace to see street vendors and shops along major roads in Lagos selling Hollywood, Chinese, and Indian films, as well as popular musical tapes (and later DVDs and VCDs) without asking questions, despite the quality of prints on the jackets showing that they may have been pirated. People were bored and there were very few movie theatres, which many entertainment lovers found somewhat unaffordable. The original items were expensive and sometimes not readily available. But these counterfeited products were available in the streets at half the price of the original. It was easy to pretend that a fake product was the real thing. The musical revolution that started in Nigeria in the late 1990s and early 2000s was also not spared as musical CDs of famous home-grown artistes such as Plantation Boyz, 2face Idibia, P Square, and Daddy Showkey were subject to grand-scale piracy. The most successful of the artistes during this period made more money from live shows and product endorsements than CD sales. The scale of piracy increased to the point where many musical artistes gave up fighting and instead, accepted it as vital to their advancement and acceptance in the industry and did not mind their music being

pirated. The reason for such acceptance is that the sophisticated and clandestine distribution network used by the pirates somewhat created a platform for their music to go far and wide and make the artiste popular. Once achieved, the popularity could then provide another platform for invitation to various well-paid live performances. But the Film business is completely different. Unlike the music business where money could still be made from live performances despite piracy, once a film has been pirated there is no other reasonable alternative of making a significant amount of money from it. Although it is true that piracy has taken Nollywood films to places that producers and their distributors did not initially have the resources to spread the sale of their works to, but this is only an excuse put forward by mischievous individuals. The president of Gabosky Film Incorporated, Gabriel Okoye revealed that he has lost over 450 million naira (US$3 million) over the years to piracy, which he described as the greatest hindrance to the growth and development of the entertainment industry in Nigeria. He described Alaba International Market as the haven of piracy where most of the illegal copying of films are done and where his company lost millions of naira that should have been made from films distributed by him (cited in The Net 2015; Premium Times 2015). His popular films that have been pirated include *Tango with Me* (2010), *Phone Swap* (2012), *Mr & Mrs* (2012), and *Onyi Ozi* (2013).

Nollywood practitioners are of the opinion that the federal government has not sufficiently protected the intellectual properties of film-makers and as such new anti-piracy laws should be enacted to tackle this illicit business and deter the perpetrators. The outdated laws protecting intellectual property have not managed the pirating of films, which is particularly serious when noting the growing patronage of movie theatres in Nigeria. Films that are still running in cinemas are simultaneously released on optical discs across the country by pirates, thereby inhibiting the commercial prospects of the films. *Half of a Yellow Sun, 30 Days in Atlanta, and October 1* are some of the big budget Hollywood/Nollywood collaboration films that have fallen prey to the heinous activities of pirates whilst running in movie theatres. This blatant infringement on the intellectual property rights of filmmakers has degenerated to the extent that pirates now have the impudence of sending text messages to film owners that their films are about to be released illegally. That was the case with Gabriel Okoye prior to releasing Kunle Afolayan's *October 1* in 2015. Afolayan was incensed at finding out that the US$2 million film, which had barely yielded half of the budget money had been pirated and he (Ogun State Television 2015) promptly responded by

sending twitter messages saying: "You want to know? Okay; the pirates already have *October 1* and have been threatening the distributor that they will release this week". His alert yielded no result, and soon after, pirated copies of the film were all over the streets of Lagos, which impelled him to send another twitter message:

> Pirated copies of October 1 film is now released by the Pirates and everywhere on the street. We have been announcing and alerting the people in government for years (sic). Is this how we will fold our hands and look? It is my turn today, it may be yours tomorrow. I am devastated. Let's come together and fight this Scourge PIRACY!!! PLEASE DO NOT BUY (Afolayan cited in Akpovi-Esade 2015).

Following Afolayan's reaction to the infringement of his intellectual property, film-makers promptly gathered on April 20, 2015 and marched through the city of Lagos to create awareness about the increasing threat of piracy. They ended at the office of the Lagos state government in Alausa, Ikeja where they made their concerns known to the governor, Babatunde Raji Fashola. Veteran filmmaker, Tunde Kelani, who was one of the organizers of the march suggested that the Federal government should elevate the penalty of piracy to the class of armed robbery and financial crimes in other to deter continued infringement activities. Similarly, Okoye asserted that the pirates and their locations are known to the filmmakers and those in authority, but the legal backing has been lacking. It is very common to find pirated films being sold by street vendors in slow traffic along most Nigerian roads and it is therefore not surprising that those involved in the march were able to seize several copies of films such as *October 1, Ije, Imole Tan, The Figurine, Phone Swap, Yellow Card,* and *30 Days in Atlanta* from street vendors on their way to the governor's office. Despite the weightiness of the crime of piracy which has put a wide hole in the profit made from Nollywood films world-wide, the perpetrators of this criminal act are entitled to bail in Nigeria and are also known to be recalcitrant. Okoye lamented that those that have been caught in the act of piracy and subsequently prosecuted after long judicial processes were merely given three months imprisonment or an option of 10,000 naira (US$63) fine (Olufowobi 2015; The Nation 2015). Most of those involved in the practice of copying and distribution of other people's films own shops within the film markets located in Alaba, Onitsha, Aba, and some other places. Most of these shops appear to be legitimate places of business

activities, but are actually there to conceal their illicit activities. Those of them that have been identified by copyrights owners do it with impunity and go as far as threatening the owners of the film with death when an attempt is made to arrest or apprehend them. Lucky Geo (Personal conversation 2015) describes the registration of a film with the copyrights commission as a waste of time, given that the commission is viewed by the marketers and filmmakers as a lame duck that has been unable to combat piracy and protect filmmakers from those infringing on their copyrights through piracy. This is because many of the pirated films are sold openly in various Nigerian streets with no fear of reprehension by the perpetrators. Lucky Geo was the chairman of the anti-piracy committee of the Lagos state marketers Association between 2010 and 2014. In my personal conversation with him, he recalled how he was regularly frustrated and threatened with death by film pirates. He also recounts how unhelpful the copyrights commission was during his time as the chairman. According to him, each time the marketers reported the infringements to the commission they were made to pay a fee and hire buses or other means of transportation to facilitate the apprehension of the culprits. He refused to disclose the amount of the fee involved, but a journalist, Justine Akpovi-Esade, captures it more succinctly in his response to Afolayan's twitter and Blackberry podcast messages:

> The pirates are known all around us, they are so rich and powerful. The Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC), the poorly funded government agency that is supposed to fight the scourge is incapacitated. Rights owners fund anti-piracy raids for the Commission, so if Afolayan wants to fight the pirates feasting on his film, he needs to cough out at least N5 million for the anti-piracy raids on Alaba Market, the hub of piracy in Sub Sahara Africa (Akpovi-Esade 2015).

The exercises mostly ended up futile because the few people that were arrested were eventually released without further pursuant of the charges. Antiquated regulation also means that criminals whose infringement offences have no stipulated punishment in the current law often escape significant punishment, if any. For example illegal uploads of films to the internet are on the rise and there is no provision in the current law to serve as a deterrent. The Nigerian Copyright Act did not take online offences into account because it was non-existent at the time the first Act was drafted and negligible at the time of the last amendment in 2004. However, online distribution of films has become

as important as the distribution of optical discs through shops and retail outlets. Again, *Half of a Yellow Sun* among other films was illegally uploaded online for free downloads in 2014 and further compounding the financial losses of the producers in all facets and languages of film production in Nigeria. The good news for industry stakeholders is that the NCC announced a new initiative known as the Copyrights System Reform in the first quarter of 2015. The aim of the initiative is to forward a reform bill to the National assembly after consultations with relevant industry stakeholders. The bill will take care of the issues of internet piracy and cybercrime which are missing in the current Copyright Act. Additionally, in August 2017, the Minister of Information and Culture revealed that an Anti-piracy Committee has been set up by the federal government to work out modalities to effectively tackle piracy. The committee comprises representatives of Industry Stakeholders, the Police, and the Ministry of Information and Culture (Premium Times 2017). Government has made countless promises and set up similar bodies and committees for the same purpose in the past. Consequently film practitioners remain unexcited and pessimistic due to the unimpressive antecedents of policymakers.

DISTRIBUTION NETWORKS IN NIGERIAN LANGUAGE FILMS

Distribution of Nigerian language films is as significant as that of English-language films giving their dominance of the volume of films made in the country. Distribution of films across the various languages is similar in several ways, and as is noted in chapter 2, there are films in over 100 indigenous languages and each of them is targeted mainly at people of similar origin who understand the spoken language of that film. However, the majority of these films expand their distribution horizon well beyond language barriers through the use of sub-titling. Besides the three major languages that dominate Nollywood, some of the most popular minor language film industries such as Bini, Efik, Ibibio, Itsekiri, Igala, and Ijaw have made profound impressions on Nollywood audiences within and outside Nigeria who do not understand these languages but are able to follow the stories with the help of sub-titling. Though, in some instances the subtitling are egregiously confusing for foreign audiences when the text translations are left in the hands of illiterate or semi-literate film editors. Hence, some of the dialogue get lost in translation, at times leading the audience towards unintended

interpretation of the work. Nonetheless, for audiences who understand these languages, the cultural import of the films remain priceless. This is particularly so for the language-speaking audiences outside Nigeria who are keen to reconnect with their tribes and cultures through the films, many of which evoke fond memories, nostalgia, and in some cases, update them with contemporary trends in their communities of origin. A remarkable example of the influence of language films on diasporic audiences is Ethnomusicologist and film-maker, Elliel Otote's (Personal Communication 2016) observation that the volume of Bini language films funded by Binis in the diaspora is on the rise due to their increasing demand.

It is also noteworthy that some of the producers and directors of minor language films who are already renowned for their English-language films leverage on their popularity with a wide spectrum of their fan base who do not understand their language but are always keen to see every new films in their catalogue. An example is Emem Isong who has a wide fan base for her English language films of which she has also profited in the sale of her Efik and Ibibio language films, selling thousands of optical discs for films such as *Uyai, Edikan, Idomo* and *Udeme Mmi*. Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen is another mainstream Nollywood Director/producer who has made impact in the indigenous film sector with not just his native Bini-language, but directed films in other languages including Igbo, Efik, and Ibibio. In Haynes' (2016, Pg. 288) delineation of their prominence in Nollywood, he summarises that both practitioners are:

> ..as central to the old Nollywood as anyone can be but are also pursuing new Nollywood strategies, and, at the same moment that they are inserting themselves into the elite and transnational circuits, they are also establishing hyperlocal markets for films in their native languages, Bini and Ibibio. Their restless creative experimentation, in the face of harsh conditions is exemplary of the Nollywood spirit (Haynes 2016, Pg. 288).

There are several others like Lancelot and Emem whose shuttle between English language and indigenous films have increased the marketing proclivities of such films and widened their reception across tribal ranks. Yet it is the three major languages that dominate distribution networks mainly due to their higher population. This sub-section will therefore be restricted to the three major Languages, which as is pointed out earlier, bear similarities to the minor language films in their modus of distribution.

Distribution of Hausa Language Films

The Hausa-speaking population is the widest of all Nigerian languages and stretches as far as Chad, Niger, and Cameroon among other countries. Like the Yoruba film industry based in the Southwest and the Igbo film industry in Southeast, which have their major marketing and distribution hubs in Oshodi, Lagos and Iweka Road, Onitsha respectively, so is Wambai Market in Kano state a major commercial centre for the Hausa film industry, Kannywood. As at 2015 the average budget of Kannywood films is between 500 and 700 thousand naira. Whereas, the most expensive films cost between 3 and 4 million naira. Anything higher than that is deemed too risky. In order to break even, a film is usually divided into two, three, or four parts, with none of the parts being complete on its own, except the final part. Adamu (2013, p. 4) notes that the 1992 film *Gimbiya Fatima* was the first Hausa film to be released in three parts on the basis of a continuing story. The films are Direct-to-DVD as cinema is literally non-existent. Unlike the eastern and western regions where Video CDs are still ubiquitous as the more affordable alternative to DVD, the Hausa film industry distributors do not give consideration to the older optical disc option. Instead, they offer DVD copies at cheaper prices to customers. The cost of producing one copy of DVD is 50 naira and it retails between 130 and 200 naira which is far less than the retail price of between 300 and 500 naira for English, Yoruba, and Igbo language films. Bifa notes that the demand for Video CD in the North is a far cry from the high demand for DVD. The reason for the low demand is not certain, but it could be that the distributors do not offer copies to customers for much less than DVD as is obtainable in the southeast in particular.

The production process is such that a producer could be responsible for financing a film from pre-production to Post-production and then, strike a deal with a distributor for the release of the film. But sometimes, individual producers approach or are approached by investors who offer to fund their film and own the film outright. They could offer the producer the money at any stage in the production process. Be it at conception or pre-production stage, shooting stage, or at post-production stage. But marketers prefer to make such arrangements at pre-production which enables them to dictate the names of their preferred star actors in the film. In this type of marketing arrangement the Marketer makes advance payment to the producer in a bid to secure the exclusive rights to sell the films with the promise of remitting the balance payments to the producer as sales are made. But many producers allege that once the advance

payment has been made, the distributors never make additional payments, citing poor or stagnated sales as excuses to renege on their promise and insisting that the producer has to share in the loss in spite of that clause not being a condition for the payment of the balance. For instance, the agreed sum could be 1.2 million naira of which 600 thousand naira could be paid initially and the balance paid once editing is completed. However, the investors who happen to be the distributors, repeatedly default. For the majority of producers that engage in this kind of arrangement, their hope of making another film is hinged on the returns made from the current film. Therefore, the implication of non-remittance of the payment balance to the producers is that many of them find it difficult making another film. This scenario is similar to what transpired between Idumota marketers and producers in the 1990s and 2000s whereby the initial sum is paid once the agreement has been signed. It then becomes difficult for the film owner to receive the rest of the money. In most instances, if the producer is lucky to receive the balance of the payment, it comes in preposterous bits over several months and in ways that make it worthless to the producer. I was a victim of such an arrangement in 2000 when I produced *Rags and Money*. Petel Foundation approached me for the distribution rights of the film and paid me the sum of 150 thousand naira prior to its release. But, citing poor sales for their decision not to pay any part of the balance which I anticipated would be over 1 million naira. For reasons such as this, film-makers no longer trust the marketers whom they accuse of piracy. In some cases, the distributors return unsold copies of DVDs to Producers who bore the cost of DVD prints and replication, citing slow or stagnated sales as reasons for their action. In most cases the returned copies amount to over 90% of the copies received. This always bemuses the producers who on the basis of outside information allege that their films have sold far more than claimed by the distributor. Some distributors have been known to defraud producers through illegal duplication of their films in multiple copies and made huge profits off them whilst claiming that the films did not sell. What is even more befuddling to the producers is that many of the distributors who also double as producers often boast about the commercial success of their own films.

As a result of the consistent acts of dishonesty by marketers, producers have become increasingly reluctant to give their films to distributors on the basis of offers made to include future remittance of sales proceeds. Instead, there are two ways films are now distributed in Kannywood. First, the films could be sold outright to a marketer whose responsibility it is to do all that is required for the distribution of the film from

the printing of Jackets, disc image, posters and other publicity materials to duplication of DVDs. In this instance the producer no longer has a stake in the film and receives the complete agreed sum of money before the Marketer is allowed to release the film. Second, some producers now market their films by themselves. These are the more ambitious ones who do not trust the marketers. They often do all the groundwork for the distribution of their film at their own expense, including printing film jackets and other publicity materials, as well as DVD replication. When all that is required for the release of the film has been completed, the producer then distributes copies of the film to movie kiosks, retail shops, supermarkets, and other places across the various Northern states. These retailers then remit monies to the producer as sales are made. Whenever a retailer runs out of stock, that retailer requests for more copies of the film from the producer who in some cases prints additional copies in order to meet up with the demands. When a film is in hot demand, retailers that were omitted from the supply chain are often eager to cash in on its popularity and waste no time in making request for copies of that film. These other group of retailers usually pay for the copies in advance because of the confidence enabled by the attractiveness of the film. In addition to the distribution outlets mentioned above, some producers utilize the services of street vendors. One way they do that is by assembling young boys and girls and giving them copies of the film in dozens to hawk in the street and make returns to them for meagre commission payments. This method of sales has proved effective for some producers as a lot of sales are made on the roadside, particularly in traffic hold up across major Northern cities.

The difference between the first and the second ways of film distribution is that outright sales mostly do not provide the producer with very impressive profit in comparison with self-distribution strategy, but it is a lot safer. Self-distribution, on the other hand, is always arduous and expensive. It is not the path that many producers are willing to go despite the huge amount of profit that could be made from it. Besides the difficulty involved in the process, many producers are also deterred by the financial risk involved as some self-distributing producers have made huge losses by so-doing. Fewer films are made these days because of the meagre profit made if any at all. Many producers have now turned their attention to the production of TV series which do not require so much work to distribute. Ahmed Bifa tells me that he produced only one film between 2015 and 2016 which is off the mark of his usual average of three and states that film-makers now mostly make films for the passion of the art rather than financial

rewards. TV now provides some form of security for film-makers. Even films that have had disappointing commercial performance often get reprieve from television stations who pay between 300 and 400 thousand naira per film. This has now become a good alternative for producers. DSTV now has a dedicated 24/7 channel for Hausa language content and pays an average of US$1000 for a film. Other TV stations that purchase broadcast rights of films include Arewa 24 (Based in Kano), Rayuwa TV (Nilesat TV), Farynwata TV (Startimes), NTA Hausa, Tauraruwa TV (Nilesat), Gamji (Nilesat), and ARTV. Bifa directed one of the most popularly TV series now showing on Startimes, titled *Yanzamani,* which is also streaming on YouTube.

Challenges and Intervention

The use of Bollywood-style dance routines remains a hallmark of Hausa language films to date. The films are released straight to DVD and cinema has become virtually non-existent today. In an interview with Abubakar Pamzat (2015), a Jos based Hausa Language film-maker and Journalist, he revealed to me that there were makeshift structures that served as local cinema spaces and screened Hausa language films all over northern Nigeria. But the venues often became raucous as fight mostly broke out and left the properties damaged and the owners with huge bills to pay. This persistent security breach prompted them to stop screening films. Conventional cinemas such as Filmhouse Cinemas and Silverbird Cinemas screen mainly English and other language films, but rarely any Hausa language film. Abubakar ascribes the dearth of Hausa language films in Nigerian movie theatres to the low standard of production. Most practitioners in the industry do not have formal training in film-making and therefore lack the basic technical skills required for the standard of films demanded by movie theatres. The greater number of them developed their film-making skills on the job. Similarly, most Hausa actors are not professional and are usually content with just appearing in a film for little or no fee. A paid actor sometimes receives as little as 5 thousand naira for a major role. But many popular lead actors are paid between 30 and 50 thousand naira. Seldom has any of the most notable star actors including Adam A. Zango, Hadiza Gabon, Jemila Nogudu, Dombu Sadiq, and Ali Nuhu received more than 200 thousand naira in a high budget film.

Poor training of industry practitioners is only a part of the myriad of problems bedevilling the industry. Government support is non-existent and government agencies

saddled with the responsibility of protecting film-makers' rights have been ineffective. Secretary General of Association of Movie Producers of Nigeria (AMP), Foster Ojeihonmo described (Personal communication 2015) the Nigerian Copyrights Commission as a lame duck that has done very little to protect the intellectual property of film producers. On the other hand, Pamzat and Ahmed Bifa, who has been in the industry for over 14 years with 11 producing and directing credits to his name, note that the commission has also been compromised and is culpable in fleecing film-makers of profit. Many film-makers believe that some officials of the commission often collude with identified pirates and other illegal movie daubers by collecting inducements to protect the culprits from prosecution. Hence, the producer fights battles on three fronts by wriggling through the harsh production environment and conditions, distributing films by themselves, and fighting piracy all at once. Bifa alleges that anytime pirates are arrested and prosecuted, they are often released within few days without further action taken against them. As a result of loss of confidence in the will of the Nigerian Copyrights Commission in protecting their intellectual property, film producers formed an association known as Film Image Protection Nigeria limited to protect their intellectual property and curtail piracy. But it has not been very effective. He asserts that it is a wild goose chase without the assistance of the government and its agencies such as the police and the copyrights commission in whom film-makers lack confidence. According to him, the producers always have to pay staffs of these agencies before they proceed to perform their primary function of enforcing the law against those caught illegitimately selling films. Yet, their actions amount to nothing, as corrupt policemen in collaboration with officials of the commission, often collect bribes from the criminals and release them. He asserts that over 25 million naira has been spent by film-makers in the fight against piracy in the last 7 years without result.

Interestingly, pirates are not just within the circles of marketers and distributors, but all over the place including the various production and post-production teams. There are several Hausa films on Youtube, which is an additional stream of revenue generation for film-makers. But sadly, most producers whose films have been uploaded to YouTube do not generate revenue from them because of piracy. Bifa's film, *Mu'amulat*, like many Hausa films was illegally uploaded to Youtube by an anonymous source in 2016. Such practices are part of an industry-wide social media piracy menace that is robbing film-makers of revenue for their intellectual property. YouTube piracy is more difficult to curtail than pirated copies of optical discs because the perpetrators

can upload from anywhere in the world with pseudonyms. Producers do not benefit from revenues generated from such streams and many of them have either lost the will to fight such cyber pirates or are simply apathetic about it. Though, some producers have started to increase their social media presence by registering their own YouTube, Vimeo, and other social media channels for the purpose of uploading films to them and generating funds from their films, but as a result of lack of action by the majority of copyright owners, thousands of pirated films are still streaming on YouTube and generating money for the illicit source. Bifa reveals that the hydra-headed problem of piracy was one of the major issues at an industry stakeholders' meeting with President Muhammadu Buhari in 2016. Film-makers at that meeting requested that the federal government should help to stem piracy at all levels including enacting new laws to combat the intractable nuisance of social media piracy, which to them requires greater urgent intervention than the other important needs of the industry such as grants, loans, and other financial assistance.

Another major challenge to film-makers is Religion, which has significant influence on the Hausa culture and has been very difficult to extricate from film-making. Despite the reprieve from the hard-line approach of Malam Abubakar Rabo Abdulkareem of KSCB when he was removed as Director General in 2011, the Hausa film industry continues to be stifled by sharia rules enforced by Hisbah and other Islamic agencies who have persistently kept close watch on film-makers to date. Hisbah is an Islamic doctrine which means accountability, and by extension, the Hisbah police coercively enforces the tenets of the sharia law in Hausa-Fulani northern states by checkmating the immoral exhibition of people in the community. This has been a major setback for Kannywood film-makers who have continued to berate the overbearing restrictions of Islamic tenets on their artistic expression. The question of morality in the Northern states has made film-making difficult for many practitioners, some of whom continue to be arrested for promoting immorality, while others have had their films banned. In 2016 *Ana Wata GA Wata* was banned for what the Director General of KSCB, Alhaji Isma'il Afakallah described (News Agency of Nigeria cited in Daily Post 2016) as being against the religious and cultural values of the state. The Hausa language film-makers is interviewed in the course of this thesis are adamant that the government and Hisbah clampdown on the industry is hypocritical, and insist that their films mirror the society rather than promote societal decadence as alleged by Islamic organizations. The level of liberalism enjoyed by film-makers in the other regions of Nigeria remains

a dream for those of the Muslim- dominated Northern region. But Kaduna, Jos, and Abuja still provide some form of respite as the more liberal cities in the north and safer haven for producers to express themselves without the fear of reprehension or apprehension.

Bifa and Pamzat suggest a restructuring of the industry as the most feasible way of making it relevant and competitive with those of the southeast and southwest. They advocate that Hausa film producers should make cinema standard films and take them to various film festivals. According to Bifa, producers are now considering coming together in groups to make individual films. The idea is to have a group of three, four, or five producers pooling their funds into one very well-made film rather than five different films. He also suggests further training of Hausa language film-makers in film schools and through seminars within and outside Nigeria in order to improve the level of professionalism which is currently lacking in the industry. In the last five years a handful Hausa film-makers have sponsored themselves abroad to learn new skills in film-making, while others are recipients of various government scholarships. Bifa is one of the recipients of scholarship awards enabled by Federal government's biggest financial support scheme for Nollywood, the Project ACT, through which he went to Asia School for Media Studies in India between 2013 and 2016. Another group of award recipients went to Reality Studio in the United States of America to learn new techniques in film-making. Such training schemes have inspired core Hausa film-makers to start creating new ideas and setting goals for visions to be achieved within the next five years as part of the developmental target for the Hausa film industry. Part of the target is to improve the technical quality of films to attract people of other tribes to watch Hausa films and be able to follow the stories – as is the case with Yoruba and Igbo language films – despite not understanding the language. Moreover, producers are now working towards leveraging on the diaspora communities in Dubai, Saudi Arabia, The UK and other countries that have large Hausa-speaking communities. To achieve this goal, the new skills acquired in the various training programmes must come to play in the technical depth of new films made in order to make them more attractive for the diaspora audience.

Distribution of Igbo Language Films

After Lagos, Enugu and Asaba remain the busiest film production state capitals in Nigeria. They are both Igbo communities and beehives of activities for film production. These are where a lot of Igbo film-makers carry out their art of movie-making. However, Onitsha and Aba remain the Major distribution hubs in the southeast. In other words, the films are made in Asaba and Enugu, but are distributed globally from Onitsha and Aba. The production of Igbo-language films are not restricted to these two states, but are made all over the south east and in the diaspora in smaller volumes. Owerri, the capital of Imo state and Awka in Anambra state are other popular locations for film-makers. An example of an Igbo film made abroad is *Onyi Ozi,* a 2013 movie produced and directed Obi Emelonye. It was made in London and features just one mainstream Nollywood actor, Okay Bakassi, who played the lead role (Metumaribe Onuigbo). It was very well received both in the Diaspora and in Nigeria.

The distribution channels of Igbo films remain straight to optical discs and then online and TV broadcast. For Optical discs, the films are released simultaneously in all the states on the same date in order to stem the activities of pirates. The marketers in the central distribution point of Aba and Onitsha deliver bulk copies in cartons to distributors in locations across the country whose responsibility it is to then use their local networks to distribute them in their various regions or states. Lots of sales are made to wholesalers on the release date and it is after this initial release that pirates duplicate the discs and distribute them through their own illicit global network. Many of the marketers release on video compact discs only, while the more confident ones release DVD copies along with VCD copies. Optical disc is the first point of release for these movies as the film-makers do not bother with cinema screening because of the long waiting period of time required to release films in cinemas – Sometimes up to a year or more for films that are deemed to be of cinema worthy quality in technical terms. Therefore, Igbo-language films do not use the cinema platform of release either in the southeast states or elsewhere. I have no memory of any. Even the technically impressive films end up at best on online streaming platforms and TV broadcast. Perhaps, DSTV's continued encouragement for Igbo-language film-makers will gradually revive and re-position Igbo films to the vantage positions of the early 1990s. But this may be an illusion given that the Igbo film-makers are still not as helpful to each other as the Yoruba and Hausa film-makers are. Unlike the Yoruba film-makers

who collaborate on projects as a means of sustaining the vibrancy of the Yoruba-language film markets, the Igbos do not have such arrangements to sustain their language films. The closest collaborative arrangements that they have arrived at is such that a number of producers put their funds into a pool that enables them to jointly pay top-grade Nollywood actors for productions in which these individual producers could not afford to pay the high fees of these actors. But then, these arrangements are for English-language films of which they have the confidence of recouping their funds once such films have been released commercially. This bargain is the same as described in the earlier chapter on *The Industrial Structure of Nollywood*. For the Yoruba film-makers, money does not need to be paid in some cases to the crew or cast members who are part of the production, but the favour must be repaid in similar fashion when it is the turn of another film-maker to produce his or hers own film; whereas for the Igbo film-makers, money must be paid, no matter how little. Everyone expects to be paid regardless of how it is done. Therefore, one could conclude that despite the commercial viability of the industry, the Art, not money, seems to be the major motivation for the Yoruba film practitioners. The same cannot be said of the Igbo-language film producers, who are now giving attention to their language films due to the new financial largesse presented by the likes of DSTV.

Philips decries the lack of proper distribution network in Nigeria. There are 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, but only a quarter of the potential market throughout Nigeria has been well exploited so far. These markets are in Abia, Anambra, and Lagos states. The other states do not have well established markets with efficacious network of film distribution to the hinterland and other potential markets. Apart from Lagos state, there is no established market set up to serve Igbo-language film lovers, particularly in Igbo communities outside the south-east region. Hence, there is gross under-utilization of a huge audience-base that can be reached. Governments across the southeast have not been too concerned with honing the economic potentials of Igbo language films. Igbo communities across Nigeria are wide-spread and it may be justifiable to conclude that the individual film practitioners and entrepreneurs that built Nollywood and the Igbo-language film industry have done as much as they can with their private resources and it is time for government – the southeast governments in this regard – to begin to build proper establishments and structures that will help to spread the channel of legitimate sales and distribution of Igbo language films. The current market and distribution structure is narrow and has become ineffective and less viable.

Many film-makers have lost confidence in the economic viability of film productions and have resorted to online and TV broadcast markets.

Distribution of Yoruba-Language Films

Distribution of Yoruba films is very similar to that of English-language films, with very little to distinguish between the channels of distribution. The major difference is that Yoruba films do not only screen at conventional cinema spaces such as those provided by Silverbird Cinemas and other famous movie theatre companies, but still utilize the style of the Yoruba traveling theatres by exhibiting the films on the road and open spaces across the southwest region of Nigeria. A classic example is Tunde Kelani's *Maami* (2011), which was screened in all the local government councils of Lagos state with mobile cinema vehicles under the sponsorship of the Lagos state government, before it was released in cinemas. It is noteworthy that even when the Nigerian film industry went into comatose between the mid-1980s and 1992, a handful of Yoruba films continued to grace public halls and entertainment venues, such as the Cinema hall of the National Arts Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos state and other cinemas in Ibadan, Oyo state. These were usually during festive periods and public holidays. Though, many of the films that were screened during this period were old films such as *Aiye*, which people were eager to see again. Between the 1990s and 2000s, the main auditorium of Lagos State Television (LTV), Ikeja and similar spaces across the southwest were popular screening venues that attracted Yoruba film lovers despite not being movie theatres. Screening of films was achieved with video projectors and that was good enough for film lovers.

While it is almost impossible to see other language films in Cinemas in the South-West, it is not uncommon to see Yoruba films in other parts of the country. *Jenifa* is an example of Yoruba films that have been screened in cinemas in Abuja and other parts of the country. As with English-language films, the chain of movie release is cinema/public screening, DVD or VCD release, Internet, and Television.

Since the early 1990s, the Yoruba film and distribution market was at Idumota, in Lagos State, but In August 2014, the secretariat of Yoruba Video Film Producers and Marketers Association of Nigeria (YOVIFPMAN) relocated to the Arena Shopping Complex, Bolade, Oshodi, which is now the official distribution and business location.

The relocation took place 5 years after the Film and Video Producers and Marketers Association of Nigeria (FVPMAN) relocated from 109 Nnamdi Azikiwe Street, Idumota. The Arena shopping complex, which is managed by wives of officers in the Ikeja military cantonment, is a safer location in comparison to Idumota where hoodlums regularly harassed customers, producers, film distributors and marketers. The place is now a beehive of activities as Yoruba films receive very high patronage. It is the pivot of distribution to all parts of the world. The level of interest in Yoruba films goes beyond the shores of Nigeria and Africa. The diaspora is a vital market for Yoruba films too. Many copies sell in North America and Europe. Although the trend of DVD or Vcd sales is fast becoming extinct as a result of internet streaming and satellite television broadcasts, yet many films are still being made. As a result of the wide acceptance of Yoruba films in the diaspora, many producers have been encouraged to make films on locations outside Nigeria. A number of Yoruba-language films such as *American Jolommy* (2010), directed by Rasak Ajao Araosan, and *Pasan* (2015) have been shot entirely or partly on locations in America, England, and other foreign countries over the years.

The major Yoruba-language film production companies and marketers include: Olasco films Nigeria Limited, Zentury Films, and Corporate pictures. Although the south west states are the primary market where the distribution network is largely concentrated, the sales permeate the entire country and outside; especially where there is a large population of Yoruba indigenes. The structure of film distribution is similar to that of English films. Compact discs are cheaper than DVDs which are sold at wholesale price of between 100 and 150 naira per copy and retail price varies between 200 and 250. The big budget and highly regarded productions sell higher than the average films. Tunde Kelani's films retail as high as 500 naira per copy. Audience's patronage and reception of a film is guided by the status of the featured actors, and in some cases, the producer or director. Olugbenga and Ayinla (2017, p.43) observe that actors and practitioners such as Kunle Afolayan, Tunde Kelani, Funke Akindele, Odunlade Adekola, Mercy Aigbe and Afeez Eniola amongst others add immense economic value to films due to their wide followership. Unfortunately, as a result of the very high volume of Yoruba films made each year, like English-language films, Yoruba films have not been spared by pirates, who have become more daring with alarming impunity. Thousands of street vendors and traffic hawkers sell Yoruba films all over

Nigeria and many of them are pirated or sold at low prices that are not commensurate to the production value of the films.

CONCLUSION

After the preceding chapters providing a history of distribution mechanisms for Nollywood, I now align the intellectual filaments of this research to present the key outcomes. I have, through this research, provided an understanding of Nollywood, a film industry with vast economic potential. This is the first academic work that takes a holistic view of the Nigerian film industry from the perspective of the industrial structure and with attention to the contemporary distribution model. My goal has been to focus – from insider and experiential perspectives – on the distribution model of Nollywood films, the strengths and challenges of this model, and how this model impacts on film production and the international profile of Nollywood. Further, I have revealed the impact of the distribution streams on independent film-makers, where the marketers, who now double as distributors/producers, create barriers to protect what they view as their own enclave from external (independent producers) forces. Their control increases because of the inadequate number of movie theatres in Nigeria.

In arriving at my conclusion, I also probed four alternative revenue generation projects, with the objective of understanding how film-makers survive without the big screen and optical disc release platforms. Such creative involvement with a view to investigating the economic logic of film-makers' engagement in such alternative revenue generation streams is new to the research encircling Nollywood. The trend of independent productions targeted at online and television audiences is rapidly growing in Nollywood due to the ambiguity associated with recouping financial investments in direct-to-video films, and therefore, deserves further academic investigation and scholarship. Prior academic work has probed online and television distribution networks and their impact on local and global audiences without delving into the intricacies of making and vending such films to the distributors. The result of my engagement with the practical aspect of making these films is that I was able to immerse myself in the process in order to amass first-hand knowledge and understanding of the modus-operandi of the production, acquisition, and distribution of online and television-tailored films. Consequently, the process of negotiation, technical requirements, and capitalist proclivities of online distribution companies such as Irokotv (the largest online distributor of Nollywood content) and DSTV (the largest pay/satellite TV broadcaster of Nollywood films) was unearthed along with the prospects and constraints involved in making films for both release platforms only.

This research has been enabled through my professional experience across a broad range of production designations (Directing, Producing, Editing, Writing, and Acting) in the Nigerian film industry. This experience and expertise has been vital to the knowledge gained in the understanding of the industry and its structures and vital to the contribution I make to research in this field. Moreover, to expand the scope of this thesis, I also interviewed 15 Nollywood practitioners across major disciplines within the industry including Optical Disc Marketers and distributors, Directors, Producers, Film exhibitors, key guilds/associations representatives, and Nigerian language film-makers. Their contributions represent vast practical knowledge that encapsulate the entirety of the Nigerian film industry, with revelations that are very important to the understanding of the contemporary Nollywood structural and distribution models, which have been vital to my conclusions in this thesis.

My thesis has also probed underdocumented moments in the development of Nollywood since the 1990s. These include creative and structural metamorphosis in relation to distribution and audience reception. In this regard, it is essential to note that although some of the major stakeholders of Nollywood's early days such as Zeb Ejiro, Chico Ejiro, Andy Amenechi, and Kenneth Nnebue are still active in the industry, engaging particularly in Industry politics and power-broking, there has been an emergent new breed of film-makers who are taking Nollywood to new heights. The most visible of them include Mo Abudu, Kunle Afolayan, Ayo Makun, and Omoni Oboli who make high-budget cinema films that have consistently broken cinema box office records in Nigeria since 2013. This group of film-makers and others are at the frontline of the transformation of this nascent industry which is still incubating and struggling to find a foothold despite the global attention it has now attracted. As I already revealed in previous chapters, some industry observers including some within the academia who have developed an interest in the study of Nollywood, view the industry with a mix of awe and disdain.

The primary task of this thesis, as articulated above, ensues in answering a central question of how we can account for the success of the Nigerian film industry, given its enormous deficiencies. There is no doubt that Nollywood is still poorly funded despite impute of Project ACT and the Bank of Industry between 2013 and 2015. Government intervention remains relatively non-existent and the lack of structure continues to fester piracy at various levels. Nevertheless, the industry continues to thrive in spite of paltry film budgets mainly because people can relate to the stories. I

identify this as the singular most important factor in the survival and sustenance of the industry since 1992. The chapter on Nollywood film Genres reveals the symbiotic relationship between the stories and the audience in a way that no other academic literature has by citing and analysing, with examples of real social events, the influence and impact of historical and contemporary social incidents on Nollywood film narratives. The discourse also reveals how the key components of Nigerian film genres are motivated by audience reception and vice-versa, as well as the popularity and distribution patterns of the films. Piracy ensures that foreign films – including Hollywood blockbusters – are in abundance and at affordable prices throughout Nigeria, but Nollywood films, which in some cases, are more expensive to purchase than these illicitly duplicated ubiquitous foreign films has remained the preference of audiences. The reason for the predilection of these Nigerian films, which are of inferior technical quality when juxtaposed with their foreign alternatives is that Nollywood indubitably reflects the Nigerian, and by extension, the African society and therefore, the film language is the one that the people understand and are able to relate with. As I noted in chapter one, 'language', in this instance is not a particular dialect, but instead, it refers to the congregation of behaviour, mannerism, signs, symbols and general idioms, nuances and expressions that are familiar to Africans and conveyed through the audio-visual medium. Thus, the audience is able to empathise with the characters. In their analysis of film and audience reception John (2017, p. 8) and Ugorji (2017, p. 2&3) note the importance of the connectivity between the film narratives and audience reception. John was pungent in his inference that "the success of a film depends on viewers' identification with characters. As we see a reflection of our own selves in the characters of a film, we participate in their lives and even reinvent our own life story". I gave several examples across various film genres of how true-life situations and stories unique to Africa have been the subject matters of Nigerian films. In other words, the foreign films, with their universal themes and superior technical quality, are entertaining, but Nollywood films, despite their several inadequacies, are not just entertaining, but connect with Africans because of their down-to-earth attributes in mirroring the people in ways that other films cannot possibly reflect. The people are intrigued at seeing themselves and their immediate society somewhat perfectly captured. But what preserves their loyalty is the didactic nature of the films, particularly when the virtuous prevails over the malevolent in the constant battle between the forces of good and evil. The Romantic Comedy, *The Wedding Party*, is a practical example of

what happens when the technical quality of Nollywood films improve. It grossed highest (over 450 million naira) at the Nigeria cinema box office between the last quarter of 2016 and first quarter of 2017 in spite of being released simultaneously with some Hollywood Blockbusters including *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*. It is a portrayal of the characteristically lavish and colourful Nigerian wedding parties that are usually chockfull with intrigues. Beyond that, the union of the couple in the film is across tribal lines – Yoruba and Igbo families – each with their unique ethnic enunciations, which is sometimes irritant to the other party. The cross-tribal approach to the film added more flavour and colour to it and ultimately broadened its appeal to the generality of Nigerians, as well as Africans in the diaspora who are keen to relate to themes that are entrenched in their cultures. There is a range of scholarly discourses about the cultural and economic characteristics of the film sector (Hesmondhalgh 2007; Moons 2007; Scott 2005; Throsby 2001) and the relationship between cultural values of films and their symbolic meanings. De Vinck and Lindmark summarise this opinions by stating that:

> The symbolic meaning of films relates to their cultural value, which can refer to aesthetic, social, historical and other types of value. Like with economic value, cultural value occurs both at the individual level and at the more encompassing level, referring to society as a whole. (De Vinck and Lindmark 2012, Pg. 25)

In essence, the success of these films is embedded in the symbolic meanings that make them extremely valuable in the audiences' perception of and interaction with them given their cultural relativity.

Another noteworthy anchor of the Nigerian film industry is the profound contribution of the four broad categories discussed in chapters four and six – Cinema, Online distribution, Optical Discs, and TV – which enable audiences to access films at various levels. The home viewership market was the only revenue-generating option available to film-makers at the resurgence of the industry in the 1990s and this was initially enabled through the sale of home videos on VHS tapes before VCD and DVD became popular at the end of the decade. During this period, the film marketers/distributors controlled the chain of distribution. They were demi-gods and the marketer's union was the most powerful of all Nollywood Guilds and Associations.

They determined who survived in the industry and which films had access to their network and chain of distribution. Anybody within the industry that loses their goodwill was subjected to doom. Then came DSTV which offered real financial transactions for copyrights procurement – an action that terrestrial TV stations shied away from. But the real game changer began in December 2004 in Lagos with the establishment of Silverbird Cinemas, a pioneer of the first five-screen Cineplex in sub-Saharan Africa. It re-established proper cinema structures in a contemporary facility and gradually restored the cinema culture that had been extinct in two decades in Nigeria. It changed the psyche of Nollywood film-makers who were keen for a stake in the high box-office revenue generated by the movie theatres – mainly from Hollywood blockbusters. The producers realized that the only way to compete with this foreign films and woo a sizeable number of local theatre-goers is to improve on the technical quality of their own films. A handful of film-makers have succeeded in doing so, and today, the three highest grossing films in the history Nigerian movie theatres are Nollywood films, with *The Wedding Party* at the top of the list. There has been vast improvement in the technical quality of Nigerian films, mainly by films made for cinemas by this group of film-makers now generally called "Cinema Film-makers".

Nollywood has steadily developed from the one-stream revenue generation industry it was in 1992 to four-stream or what I refer to as quadruplicate income channels today, with each of them – Optical discs, TV, Cinemas, and Online Streaming including movie apps for mobile devices – having its own distinctive audience. Optical film distributors no longer wield the kind of power that they once had and many film-makers now call their bluff as a result of the multiple release platforms now available to them. Cinema films remain the most expensive and make up approximately 5% of Nigerian films. But optical discs (primarily cheap VCD) still has the largest market of Nollywood films, with approximately 80% of the volume of films made in Nigeria. My assertion is that the survival of the business in this category has been hinged on low-budget and high volume productions from 1992 to date. The larger percentage of these films are not suitable for cinemas due to bad audio and poor production, neither are they accepted by major online distribution companies such as Irokotv, Netflix, and Ibakatv for the same reason. They mostly end up on YouTube, which is replete with them. Like optical disc films, internet/online films, which predominantly cater for Diasporic audiences, are low-budget, but of far better technical quality and only films

that have been certified to meet the minimum standard of their highly demanding Quality Control (QC) departments are accepted and paid for.

Regardless of the stream of distribution utilised by any film, the question of the sustainability of the regional and global attention that Nollywood has captured has been addressed by the multiple streams of revenue generation now available to film-makers. Online film distribution has widened the scope of Nollywood films across the world and far beyond what piracy made possible prior to the establishment of internet streaming sites. Irokotv, for instance has approximately 170 revenue generating countries of which Africa makes up only 11%. It has also developed its own apps to enable easier and increased access of Nollywood film enthusiasts to its contents (Ajene 2017). There is now greater access to Nigerian films and new windows of opportunity are opening, with Nollywood receiving greater global attention and recognition, not just for the volume of films made, but for its unique stories and increasingly acceptable technical standard in conformity with world-best practices. As indicated earlier in this thesis, major international film festivals across the globe are now celebrating Nollywood and accepting more of its film entries. 2016 and 2017 have been very fruitful in this sense.

The key sustaining factors of Nollywood's success have been highlighted in this project, but what sets Nollywood apart is the drive and audacity of individual film-makers and distributors to constantly find new ways of reaching new audiences and ensuring that the foreclosure of one channel of distribution does not result in the end of a project. Low budget eventuates in restricted access to the best resources (material and human), but Nollywood is a model that equates to resourcefulness, even if recourse to feudal means will deliver result. That is exactly what *Living in Bondage* did in 1992 at a time when the world celebrated celluloid, which had become out of reach for Nigerian film-makers for reasons is enumerated in the chapter on the History of Nollywood – recourse to obsolete video cameras and VHS tapes paid off – and this audacious characteristic remains in abundance in Nollywood despite the continued fusillade of criticism that follow the poor picture quality of these films. What matters to the film-makers is the patronage of their target audience. Once that patronage declines, then new means are sought to recapture them.

Ajene (2017) remarks further that the characteristics that are evident in the evolution of Irokotv through the years include: "aggressive cost management through activity chain integration, market-growing pricing strategies, identification and

addressing of unmet consumers' needs, and heightened focus on everyday African consumers at the base of the pyramid". These characteristics are not unique to Irokotv, but underline the sustaining power of Nollywood. For example, when the decline in the sale of DVD became noticeable, film distributors reverted to VCD to cut cost and redirect their energies to the consumers at the base of the pyramid which were yet to be captured by online streaming sites. Hence, the introduction of new marketing strategies such as 'Oil' to mitigate the effect of poor optical disc sales. Wholesale and retail prices of films were drastically reduced for affordability by the consumers and more quantities are sold.

What may be lacking (and necessary) in other film industries of developing nations is the drive and audacity that is required to break through the walls of pecuniary and other emasculating factors within their creative industries. Film-makers who intend to make a living through their trade must find new – or old - ways of creatively telling stories rather than be suppressed by universal technical standard descriptions that tend to be an Eldorado for the majority in third world and developing nations. Hall (1973, p.128) notes that "there can be no consumption if no meaning is taken" and therefore, regardless of cinematographic perfections, if the story and vehicle of communication draw no connection – in the form symbolic language that encapsulates the social life, ideologies and conflicts of the times within the particular society as Gabriel (1982, p.1&2) augments – then, there will be no patronage. The story takes precedence. Nollywood has been an aberration of typical film-making industries for nearly three decades, but is now being accorded its place of pride within the curious world of the academia and the creative industries across the globe due to its persistently distinctive physiognomies. Gradual improvement in technicalities of film-making is only an icing on the cake.

KEY FINDINGS

This research has revealed key arguments and interpretations to enable future scholarship. I have confirmed that Nollywood remains a low-cost and high volume industry and now has four distinctive distribution channels: Cinema, Optical Discs, Internet/Online Streaming and Television. Despite the growing profile of cinema films (in terms of swelling volume of production and higher audience consumption and profitability) and Online Streaming companies/production, the Optical Disc market is still very relevant, but highly informal and disorganised notwithstanding dominating

the volume of films made. The Optical disc film distribution market is still too esoteric and requires an openness that enables more films to have access to this network of markets.

Another key variable for consideration is that piracy remains a parasite in the industry with impunity and Government willingness to combat copyright abuses is still apathetic. It is therefore not surprising that practitioners interviewed on this thesis resonate the general industry preference for copyrights laws to be reviewed to reflect contemporary realities with stiffer penalties and better implementation of deterrents against copyrights abuses. Thus, Nollywood practitioners favour stiffer penalties on copyrights abuses over financial incentives to the industry.

The success of Nollywood remains a paradox as it continues to be plagued by unideal production environments such as lack of electricity, noisy milieu, bad roads, and poor transportation facility. Yet, Government financial intervention is still too miniscule and must be expanded to accelerate the development of the industry as well as government revenues derivable from the business of film-making. Moreover, Nollywood remains a goldmine that requires proper structure to blossom.

More financial investments are now being injected by individuals and corporate organisations into the production of cinema-modelled films as a result of the recent successes of Nollywood films at the box office. The copycat nature of Nigerian film practitioners and investors in following the direction of successful films could be counterproductive if caution is not exercised. There is now the danger of saturating the industry with such expensively made films without a commensurate increase in the number of cinemas across the country. The unpleasant experiences of films like *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *93 Days* underline the danger of shying far away from the low-cost model that has been the bedrock of Nollywood since 1992. Hence, based on research carried out on this project, it is evident that the cinema culture is gradually being restored, but the number of cinema screens need to be commensurate to the demand. Failure to do so will result in excessive number of films competing for very little cinema space with consequent implosion that may scare investors away.

Furthermore, my experiment with films made only for online streaming and TV distribution platforms reveal that online distribution, particularly, is unable to cope with that large volume of films now being made specifically for such platforms as Irokotv and Ibakatv. As a result, the financial expectations of the owners of these films are being eroded. I related my experience with *Trapped* in 2015 when Irokotv reneged on

our initially agreed acquisition fee of US$6000 and halved it due to supply of films outweighing their demand by the time I was submitting the final cut of the film. My experience reflects the plight of the hundreds of filmmakers who have no access to the mainstream optical disc market and cinema. In order to mitigate the danger of financial losses, I kept my costs very low whilst maintaining decent production quality which resulted in my making profit from the films.

Low cost and creativity remain key to producers in this highly competitive market and this project represents a unique expose of the kinetics of the Nigerian film industry from undocumented perspectives that include those of industry practitioners. My in-depth analysis of the current fiscal realities of marketing and distribution of direct-to-video films is novel in the definition of the structural make-up of much of Nollywood. I have also been able to comparatively analyse the quadruplicate model of film distribution and current developments in restructuring the film industry and how these could impact its progress. I have established that government intervention remains miniscule, but if and when such intervention is galvanized, it must be done to avoid undermining the development of young and emerging film-makers who have found ways of creatively utilizing their modest budgets and limited resources in defiance of national economic adversity.

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