FILM IN NIGERIA; HISTORY, TRANSFORMATION, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at film in Nigeria from the first film exhibition in Clover Memorial Hall to the current wave marked by the emergence of the Nigerian video film industry in the 1990s. Since then, the industry having carved out a unique video production system for itself is recognised globally as the second largest in terms of output and has saturated many homes in Nigeria, Africa, and beyond. This paper looks at how the political and economic organization of the Nigerian film industry affects the production and circulation of cultural content with a focus on ownership, finance, government policies, and economic, social, cultural, and political pressures on production and consumption of media content. The paper also identifies the many challenges faced by the industry, such as blatant piracy, non-enforcement of the copyright law, and pressures of survival in the technologically driven global film market. The paper recommends that Nigerian film producers need to take film production as a profession not just as the mere trade some producers consider it to be and embrace digital distribution methods for recoupment of investment capital. On its own side, the Nigerian government must provide an enabling environment for the Film Industry by making and adequately implementing better policies that will attract investors and convince financial institutions to provide support while protecting investment capital which will allow it favourably to compete with its peers in other nations.

Keywords: Film, History, Transformation, Challenges, Prospects and Nigeria

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF FILM

The word film, just like many others may refer to several concepts based on the context of usage. In this chapter, however, it is addressed within the context of communication message production and dissemination. Film refers to a flexible light-sensitive plastic used to capture images in a camera for subsequent editing and projection as moving images in the cinema or on television. Film can also refer to a set of moving pictures arranged in a meaningful sequence to tell a story or pass a message. The reference to both a material, the process and the finished product as film is an extension of the technology used to achieve both. The terms motion picture and moving image were also used to refer to the earliest film productions although of recently the word movie is more popular, yet the word film is most preferred and used in the context of academic study and research.

Filmmaking involves using a camera that can take a rapid sequence of images, each known as a frame. The projection of recorded images at many frames a second makes the brain work with the images captured by the eye to give an illusion of motion. The number of frames projected per second is known as 'frame rate' and the illusion of normal movement is 24 frames per second (fps). Anything less than 24 frames in a second projects slow motion while more gives an illusion of abnormally fast motion by the characters in the recorded footage.

History has documented no sole inventor of the camera but has instead established the effort and invention of several pioneers of the industry (Richard, 2004). In 1845, a machine capable of capturing images for a continuous 24-hour period was invented by Francis Ronalds at the Kew Observatory in Richmond England which was a very notable milestone for Film production. In 1876, Wordsworth Donisthorpe made a theoretical proposal for a camera that could take pictures and image them onto glass plates, to be later printed on a paper film. However, before Donisthorpe's invention could come to fruition, Étienne-Jules Marey, a scientist and chronophotographer made a first-of-its-kind invention. He invented the chronophotographic gun in 1882 with the capacity to shoot 12 images per second and capture moving images on the same chronophotographic plate with a metal shutter.

Another notable personality in film development was William Friese-Greene, who also began experimenting with the paper film in 1887. He made it transparent by oiling it to record moving images and with the help of Alexander Parkes also started experimenting with the celluloid film. Louis Le Prince started the design for a 16-lens camera in 1887 at a workshop in Leeds, England and after a lot of efforts was finally only able to build and patent a single-lens camera in 1888 which could capture moving images in sequence on paper film. Le Princes' invention is believed to be the one that spurred the film making profession.

As inventors were busy with the creation of the best motion picture recording cameras, the same industry needed a more realistic replacement for the very heavy, fragile, and difficult to carry glass plates for printing and processing of the captured images. The material will have to be easy to transport, flexible, durable, transparent, and waterproof but finding a single material with all these characteristics was extremely difficult. The celluloid which later became the much sought-after film material had its origins in the experiments of Alexander Parkes in synthetics. In 1872 Brothers John and Isiah Hyatt called the new material celluloid and founded the Celluloid Manufacturing Company which became one of America's biggest plastic and synthetic material manufacturing companies. John Carbutt, an English emigrant recognized the application of celluloid to the photography industry and contracted the celluloid production company to produce photo-sensitive gelatine dry plates. Carbutt founded the Keystone Dry Plate Works and is the first person to commercially manufacture gelatine dry plates for photography. Finally, the 15-inch wide Carbutt film was ready for experiment by Edison Motion Picture in 1888 but was considered too stiff for motion picture photography that requires seamless movement of the material in the camera. By 1889, a more flexible celluloid was developed which ensured its utilization as a most preferred material for filmmaking for more than a century.

In 1889, Friese-Greene patented a motion picture camera capable of capturing ten photographs per second. In the same year, George Eastman an American inventor, entrepreneur, and manufacturer introduced the roll film in a transparent base which is still the standard 'film' for celluloid film production. In 1890, Friese-Greene used perforated rolls of Eastman's celluloid

film. Although He did show his cameras, the film shot with them and his camera was even published in the *Photographic News* of Britain in 1890, Friese-Greene never did a public exhibition of his works although he shared details of his invention with Thomas Alva Edison, an American inventor.

William Kennedy Laurie Dickson, a Scottish inventor, and employee of Thomas Edison, designed the Kinetograph Camera in 1891. The camera used an electric motor with the first practical high-speed stop-and-go film movement that set the foundation for 20th-century cinematography. Charles Moisson, the chief mechanic at the Lumière Works of Lyon, a company owned by brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière created the The Lumière Domitor camera in 1894 which used the 35 millimetre paper film. The Lumiere brother's version of the picture recording device is believed to have a connection to French inventor Leon Bouly who is believed to have coined the term 'cinematograph'. In the same year (1894), a Polish inventor Kazimierz Prószyński invented a one piece projector and camera called the *Pleograph* and also built and patented the *Aeroscope* in England between 1909 and 1911. The *Aeroscope* was the first hand-held operated film camera which allowed for filming in difficult circumstances such as from planes and for coverage of military operations.

The first motion picture commercial and public exhibition was a home made film made by brothers, Max, and Emil Skladanowsky. In 1895, the Lumière brothers also bought celluloid film from New-York's Celluloid Manufacturing Company which they covered in a blue emulsion, cut into strips then perforated. They used the celluloid film in December of 1895 to produce the 46-second-long *Workers Leaving the Lumiere Factory in Lyon* which captivated audiences all over Europe. They also produced the legendary *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station* in 1896 which made viewers run out of the exhibition theatre for fear the train was real and bursting from the screen to crash into them. In the same year, "The Haunted Castle", a three-minute film was the first with paid actors and props.

Emergence of Commercial Film Production

The combined efforts of Le Prince, Friese-Greene, Edison, the Lumière brothers and all the other notable personalities documented here helped to create recording, printing, processing and projection devices set that positioned film production to become a lucrative profession. Their individual and collective success spurred others to keep experimenting and contributing to motion picture production. However, in those years, the experiments were by individuals especially artists that saw film as an extension of art and was not so recognized as a viable income generating profession (Kokonis, 2010; Sardana, 2013). Therefore, film initially thrived in Europe in a form that is today regarded as "art Cinema", treated with the same reverence as art with much emphasis on aesthetics, its success or failure attributed to individuals (Rushton & Bettinson, 2000).

As people with artistic inclination were getting attracted to the new media of expression, business minded people were also utilising film to generate revenue and make profit, and this was the motivation that led to the emergence of commercial film production industries first in Europe, America and Asia but gradually spread to all parts of the world. History has shown that:

> The foundation of any industry is the public acceptance of the efforts of an individual or group of people who labour to produce a unique work of art, for once an art form gains acceptance and becomes income generating, profit driven investors flock around it and struggle to gain control. It was not long before the commercial prospect of film was

> perceived, and it became evident that there was money in 'the pictures' (Mohammed, 2016: p. 2).

Eastman Kodak was one of the earliest camera manufacturing companies and later others such as Gaumont-Démény, Schneider, Schimpf, Eugene Augustin Lauste, Dickson, Pathé frères, Prestwich, Newman & Guardia, Bell & Howell, Leonard-Mitchell and Lytax among others joined the industry.

The earliest films were called 'Silent movies' because inventors had not yet found a way to record picture alongside sound. These films such as the Charlie Chaplin films relied on a separate sound recording or a live orchestra to be played alongside the projection. Thomas Edison was the pioneer in sound movies because he developed the Kinetoscope which was the first sound system in 1895, which had a separate sound cylinder played along with the projected film and most times lacked synchrony ability to put sound on the actual movie film that was patented by American inventor, Lee De Forest. He was the first to put sound on film in 1919 and with the help of another inventor, Theodore Case, he continued to work on the sound-on-film system until it was perfected in 1927 (Kokonis, 2010).

By the 1920s, sound films known as the 'talkies' were starting to be produced and exhibited by filmmakers. In 1921, America D.W. Griffith released a short film clip called *Dream Street* with snatches of street noises and conversations but no recorded dialogue and *Birth of a Nation* in 1925. The first commercially successful sound film was *The Jazz Singer* which was shown in 1927. A German film titled the *Metropolis* took several years to film and used then state-of-the-art special effects which was a remarkable feat and made it a pace setting film in that period (Sardana, 2013).

The global hunger for audio visual entertainment has turned film into a lucrative business characterised by ever changing innovations and a stiff competition for relevance by various film producing industries all over the world. Every country, region, culture has set up its own distinct filmmaking industry. Time and innovation have also taken the film production business to a level where there is little or no similarity with the acclaimed exhibition of 1895. The earliest cinematograph was dependent on glass plates to capture images rendered obsolete as more advanced cameras were manufactured by equipment manufacturing companies such as Nikon, Canon, and many others (Rushton & Bettinson, 2000).

Film in Nigeria

Colonial Nigeria

In the early 20th century, private film merchants, Balboa and Company who were exhibiting silent films in the west African coast got invited by Herbert Macaulay, a popular Nigerian nationalist to do an exhibition in Nigeria. Balboa and Company positively responded by coming to exhibit a film at Glover Memorial Hall, Lagos in August 1903 (Ali, 2004; Zajc, 2009). That film exhibition of 1903 became the historical landmark of film debut in Nigeria and attracted other European film producers and exhibitors (Ekwuasi, 1984: p. 9). In the early years of film in Nigeria, production, distribution, and exhibition was centred in Lagos under high censorship by the colonial government. In time it spread to the other parts of the South-west region and the whole of the country (Ekwuasi, 1984).

After the Second World War, the western nations recognised the importance of propaganda as a tool for winning the war. This was an influencing factor for the establishment of film units in the British colonies to ginger and promote support for the British government against Hitler's Nazi. The Colonial Film Unit (CFU) was set up in Nigeria in 1947 to produce pro-colonial content portraying the good aspects of colonialism to the world. All of this was to enhance British media imperialism and convince the indigenous people of the superiority of the British ways over theirs. Subsequently, the productions started to take pro-development dimensions and were funded through the Colonial Government Welfare Act (CDWA) (Ekwuasi, 1991: p. 2). In northern Nigeria also, film was introduced to the region by the same British colonialists and product marketers who projected films (*Majigi*) at strategic locations with the goal of sensitization and impartation of colonial ideology. After independence, the CFU became the Federal Film Unit (FFU) but still retained most of the functions of the CFU by producing documentaries but were targeted at national unity and development (Mohammed, 2016; Ali, 2003).

Indigenous Nigerian Filmmaking

While the feature film, *Fincho,* produced in 1958 by Sam Zebba, is the first notable film by a Nigerian, it was a lone production but the 1960s to the 80s were regarded as the golden decades for the debut of indigenous Nigerian celluloid film production (Mgbejume, 1989: p. 65). Those years saw the emergence and experiments of indigenous Nigerian filmmakers, most of them graduate returnees of film production from the West. They returned to Nigeria full of passion for indigenous Nigerian filmmaking wanting to tell their stories to the world. Notable among them were Sanya Dosunmu, Jab Adu, Ola Balogun, Adamu Halilu, Ade Foloyan, Sadiq Balewa, Adejumo Olaiya, Brandan Shehu, Ramalan Nuhu, Eddie Ugbomah, Sule Umar, Herbert Ogunde and Bankole Bello. In 1970, Calpeny Nigeria Limited produced *Kongi's Harvest*, based on Wole Soyinka's play and was directed by American Ossie Davies. *Sanders and the River* was the first independent film partly shot in Nigeria and had Nigerian Orlando Martins together with American Paul Robeson as lead actors. In 1970, *Kongi's Harvest* was the first indigenous feature film produced by Francis Oladele of Calpeny Nigeria Limited, a Nigerian filmmaker. The next Nigerian to try his hand at filmmaking was Ola Balogun, a graduate of IDHEC film school Paris with *Amadi* and *Ajani Ogun* in 1975 (Zajc, 2009).

In northern Nigeria, the first indigenous Hausa film was *Shehu Umar* in 1977 and the second was *Kanta of Kebbi* in the early 1980s both produced and directed by Adamu Halilu. In the same decade, Sadiq Balewa produced *Kasar Mu Ce* while *Zainab* and *Kulba na Barna* were also produced by Brandan Shehu and *Ruwan Bagaja* by Ramalan Nuhu. *Maitatsine* was also produced by Sule Umar in 1988 which was shown at the African Film Festival (FESPACO) at Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in 1989 (Jibril, 2003).

Most of the indigenous and passionate Nigerian film producers of the 1970s and 1980s faced challenges of insufficient financing systems, distribution, and exhibition networks. The cost of celluloid film production was also unaffordable for upcoming producers coupled with the not too robust market. Many of them went bankrupt because despite their attempts at producing films which were educative and historical in approach, they could not compete with the entertainment-based fantasy filled Western, Indian, and Chinese films that remained first choices

to avid cinema viewers all over Nigeria. Those films were the orientation into a foreign lifestyle for the urban generations of the 1960s and 1970s who grew up attached to them.

The Nigerian Video Film Industry

The arrival of VCR machines into Nigeria in the 1980s changed the film landscape. The film merchants found a new market, that of importing and selling foreign video films and blank tapes. These VCR machines became popular and saturated many affluent homes while viewing centres were also established in certain locations. The business of video renting and recording also made these films accessible to a part of the population that had access to VCRs. The concurrent importation of used electronics increased the rate of this access which ensured that even young children had access to many foreign video films they could rent and even exchange among themselves. That was the beginning of what Adamu (2006) refers to as foreign media bombardment of our societies. The exorbitant budgets of celluloid film production coupled with the previous experiences of filmmakers that have gone bankrupt due to inability to gain back their expenses had stalled many wishful producers from making attempts at filmmaking. During the late 1980s to the early 1990s, the availability of various forms of video recording and playback equipment was an important milestone in the history of video production in Nigeria. Nigerian producers opted to change their production format from professional celluloid format to the available, cheaper, and more flexible video format.

Even though the Nigerian video film industry is regarded as a single entity in the global arena, video filmmaking in Nigeria has a regional history, coordination, and characteristic. The predominantly Hausa speaking northern Nigeria has a film industry with its origins in the ancient and commercial city of Kano nicknamed *Kannywood*. *Kannywood* has a unique production structure greatly influenced by the popularity of the Hindi film industry in the region. In the south of Nigeria, exist a Yoruba language film industry in the South-west, an Igbo language film industry in the south-east and most popular and impressive, an English/Pidgin film industry based in Lagos known as *Nollywood* which has managed to capture global attention, collaboration, and acclaim.

Northern Nigeria

In northern Nigeria, the exposure to foreign media, specifically Hindi films had a conspicuous effect on Hausa society which was the emergence of new media of entertainment in the late 1980s. The first was the Hausa language novellas christened by scholars as *Adabin kasuwar Kano* (Kano market literature) because they were mostly written and printed in Kano and do not follow the rules nor possess the elements of literary writing. The storylines of these novellas revolved round a theme of love and conflict, were full of poetic narratives, prophesies of love and even love songs like the Hindi films. Many of these novels were also copycats of the films although the writers made attempts to adapt them to fit the Hausa cultural and social system. This trend later came to define the structure of Hausa video film production. The second emergent media in northern Nigeria was the drama and dance theatre troupes that performed at occasions and festivities. Availability of affordable video recording equipment allowed these drama troupes to experiment with recording their dramas. The amateurish experiments of Sani Lamma, Hamisu Gurgu and Sadiya Bakar Indiya in the 1980s in the northern Nigerian city of Kano ushered in a new reality; that of Hausa video film production. They produced *The Rider, 'Yan Daukar Amarya, Turu* and *Wakokin Sadiya (*Mohammed, 2016).

Turmin Danya was the first commercial Hausa video film produced by *Tumbin Giwa* drama troupe in 1992 then *Cin Amana* was also aired on Katsina State Television. The success of these films opened a new media landscape that will go beyond Nigeria, and which has transformed over the years. Popular Hausa novelists moved into scripting and film production; *Gidan Dabino* publishers became *Gidan Dabino* video production, Danazumi Baba Cediyan 'yar Gurasa became *Raina Kama* Studios and many more. Therefore, many of the pioneer Hausa video films were adaptations of Indian and Western movies and others were metamorphosis of Hausa novellas that were themselves appropriations of Indian films such as *In da so da Kauna* (Jibril, 2003).

Since then, the recognition of the Hausa video film industry as a potential investment ground that requires little expertise, the most minimal of budgets and a robust market hungry for new films but caring little about conventions so long the stories are sheathed in love themes with beautiful costumes, attractive dance steps and beautiful song interludes. It soon became a trend that the moment an actor was able to earn enough to fund a film he could be both producer and director, and sometimes also the main actor. The main attraction for Hausa video film producers was majorly the financial potential (Mohammed, 2020).

Southern Nigeria

Like northern Nigeria, the idea of video films was also inspired by the drama troupes specifically the Yoruba travelling theatre. According to Adesokan (2005), the video film industry "grew out of benign bootlegging of music videos in a cassette culture…cannibalising the idioms of the soap opera, Yoruba travelling theatre, and remnants from the golden era of the Nigerian cinema" (2005: p. 43). The idea of utilising video technology in commercial film production was later introduced by Babatunde Adelusi, a former magazine publisher of to-play Magazine who argued on its affordability as well at it becoming an alternative to Indian and Chinese films.

> This idea was later actualised by Ade Ajiboye (Big Abass) who produced SOSO MEJI, the first Nigerian Video film in 1988. It was shown publicly at Tinuade Cinema in Oworonshoki, Lagos for a token fee and it was successful. Subsequently, Alade Aromire produced EKUN in 1989 which he screened at the National Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos. The success of the movies was an eye opener for other producers. Hence many Yoruba movie actors and enthusiasts mostly based in Meiran, a Lagos suburb sought assistance from film promoters like Kenneth Nnebue of Nek Video Link, Lagos and Sulaimon Aweda who were both important film distributors and exhibitors (Adesokan, 2005, p. 43).

Kenneth Nnebue, a foreign film marketer capitalising on the gains of the industry utilised a container full of blank video tapes to produce a home video titled *Living in Bondage* in 1992. The film was produced by Okechukwu Ogunjiofor AKA Paulo, written by Kenneth Nnebue and Okechukwu Ogunjiofor, directed by Chris Obi Rapau. At a production cost of N150, 000, Paulo projected a sale of 100,000 copies and believed he was going to hit millions of Naira. His projection became true when he was able to sell 750,000 copies at N300 each amounting to approximately 200 million naira which is a huge sale even for contemporary Nigerian producers. *Living in Bondage* proved that commercial film production could once more become a reality and today, the Nigerian film industry (Nollywood) is the third largest in the world in terms of industry size (Zajc, 2009; Furniss, 2009; Jedlowski, 2010).

TRANSFORMATION OF THE NIGERIAN VIDEO FILM INDUSTRY

According to the UNESCO 2009 report, the Nigerian Film Industry is the second most productive film industry in the world having overtaken the American Film Industry but behind the Indian film Industry in terms of number of annual productions (Opeyemi, 2012). With an annual turnover of about $200 million, it is an industry that has defied many of the conventions of film production and created its own special system of survival. Between 1994 and April 2005, the board reviewed 4,600 Nigerian films, but only one of them was celluloid (NFVCB statistics, 2013). During the early years, Nollywood never made it into global film and Box office statistics because the West refused to recognise video film production. However, of recent the informal glaring success of the industry has necessitated the recognition of Nollywood in global academic discourse, film statistics and investment value.

This paper has earlier established the failure of indigenous Nigerian filmmaking and the origins of video film to the plummeting economy, political instability, and general social collapse in the 1980s and 1990s in Nigeria, coinciding with availability of cheap portable video equipment that many unemployed creative youths choose to utilise for commercial purposes (Zajc, 2009; Mohammed, 2020).

Both Kenneth Nnebue and Okechukwu Ogunjiofor were traders that seized an opportunity to make money by producing *Living in Bondage* and it had a storyline that was centred on rituals. The film therefore, greatly influenced the production structure seen in Nollywood productions in the 1990s and 2000s. It was very informal with film sponsors, mostly urban traders deciding the film storylines and simply hiring producers to film those stories (Omoera, 2009). Those video films were "'lustreless' and based on domestic themes, marital problems, extended family intrigues and witchcraft" (Furniss, 2003). The producers also imbibed unwholesome culture from other societies – America, Japan, China, and India without synthesizing the rationale to produce such feature films by these societies (Ekwazi, 1984; Alamu, 1991; Adeleke, 1995 cited in Mohammed, 2020). The Nigerian video film industry had a purely commercial outlook, a profit-oriented motivation and amateurish film production personnel which were all factors that determined its structure up to the first decade of the 21st century.

The remarkable sales in the 90s and early 21st century attracted people to the business encouraging mass production and as a result, video viewing centres and rental shops emerged as unconventional channels of distribution serving as sources of income to many people at the detriment of the actual producers. Even the cinema halls gradually migrated to using video projectors instead of the 35mm cinema projectors. According to Jibril (2003), a most striking feature of the Nigerian video films is the rise of the medium from almost nothing and how networks of distribution, sales and exhibition that never existed rose (Jibril, 2003). The Nigerian film industry had a unique straight-to-DVD process that was not seen in any film production industry anywhere prior to the emergence of the video film production in Nigeria. The production cycle was also very short lasting a week or 10 days and the whole cycle from production to distribution ending within a month (Zajc, 2009). The factors behind the short cycle had to do with the meagre budget, the need to sell quickly and reproduce and the pressing need to avoid loss of investment to piracy which has been an ever-hanging threat to Nigerian film producers (Zajc, 2009; Mohammed, 2020). By the new millennium, there were so many video film production companies owned by directors, actors, traders and distributors that have enough capital to dabble into film production and number of annual productions skyrocketed. In the 1990s, a film was able to sell 100,000 to 200,000 official copies but due to the increased number

of productions, sales declined because the audience had many options to choose from. Producers responded by breaking the video films into two, three and sometimes even four parts to make sales like they did in the 1990s. "Producers therefore cut time and costs of production" and narrative quality decreased though the technical quality increased due to advanced technology (Jedlowski, 2010, p. 8; Mohammed, 2016).

According to the National Film and Video Censors Board statistics, 2013, annual video film production increased from 389 in 1999 to 1018 in 2002, which amounts to about 300% growth rate (Mohammed, 2020). Despite the problems mentioned above, the Nigerian film industry has grown and matured considerably and over the years there has also been a marked improvement in the quality of Hausa video film production, very much related to new technologies among other factors. The earliest Nigerian video films were recorded and produced on half inch Betamax tape format with little consideration for standard production and post-production treatments (Jibril, 2003). The films were usually produced on ½ Panasonic M-series camcorders (M-T, M-10, M-300 and M-9500) and Hitachi, JVC, Samsung Mini-Cams. By the 1990's technology had advanced and made available better video products at cheaper rates and more than 95% of all films were produced on VHS analogues and edited on *Casablanca* linear editing system until 2000/2001 when desktop computer digital editing was introduced to the market and used for editing (Jibril, 2003).

From 1992 that marks the start of commercial film production to 2009, video film exhibition was very unstructured. The earliest producers did cinema showings but as the industry became chocked up with traders with predominantly commercial interest, exhibition disappeared. In northern Nigeria, what was known as the *Gidan kallo* (viewing house) was commonplace. *Gidajen kallo* (plural) are informal exhibition locations set up by individuals with television sets and VCR/DVD machines in houses within communities, charging a token for viewership.

According to Screen Digest, World feature studies (2013), Nigeria was exempted from most statistics because of the straight-to-DVD mode of production. In most ratings of African film industries, other African countries come top on the chart but when film production was considered, Nigeria comes top globally. Cinema culture collapsed in many African countries in the 1990s and the first few years of the new millennium (Rorvit, 2012). The emergence of modern multiplexes changed the playing ground for Nigerian producers. Amata's *Amazing Grace* (Amata, 2006) made on 35mm tape reintroduced celluloid to Nigerian cinema while *Irapada* (Afolayan, 2007) also produced to meet world standards on 35mm celluloid, enjoyed long periods of screening. After the success of *Irapada*, Afolayan again experimented with *The Figurine* (Afolayan, 2009) daring to use a budget of N80 million, the highest budget in Nigerian film history by 2009. Stephenie Okereke made another film, *Through the Glass* and was able to make N10 million in the first three weeks of cinema release (Akande, 2009) and since then, it has been an amazing journey for cinema screening in Nigeria. So many Nollywood productions such as *Your Excellency, Sugar Rush* and *Merry Men* have grossed in hundreds of millions of Naira in the Box office. In 2016 and 2017, *The Wedding Party 1 and 2* each grossed over a million USD. Funke Akindele a Nigerian Actress, Director and Producer nicknamed 'The Box Office Queen' has continued to break her own record for highest grossing Nigerian film since 2020 with *Omo Ghetto: The Saga* and *Battle on Bukka* with each grossing close to 1.5 million USD in 2020 and 2022 respectively. Her last film, *A Tribe called Judah* is the first Nigerian film to rake in 400 million Naira in just twelve days and so far, 1.1 million USD in domestic theatre. (BBC News 05/01/24).

In the three decades of its existence, Nollywood has become one of the most important creative industries enjoying larger budgets and glitzy international premieres in international locations (Mohammed, 2020). The Nigerian film industry was projected to make $100 million per annum and employs hundreds of thousands of people in 2007 (Chowdury et al., 2008). A study by Price Water Coopers shows it contributed N239 billion to Nigeria's GDP in 2016 and is currently projected to generate close to a billion naira annually while directly employing more than 300,000 people and a million more indirectly.

The Nigerian video film industry has been consistent for over three decades and there is a marked improvement in professionalism, production quality, production capital and storyline structure. The transformation the Nigerian film industry has undergone has been majorly due to the tenacity, dedication, and perseverance of the practitioners and little from the government. Although the industry has gotten public attention at home and abroad, it is still battling the following challenges:

1. Lack of sponsors and limited number of individuals willing to invest in film production. Producers must source for capital from personal funds. The perception of filmmaking is rather negative especially in Northern Nigeria. Many potential investors do not see film as a respectable profession and prefer to buy and sell commodities, invest in oil and gas or go into import and export (Mohammed, 2016). The limited capital is why film producers are unwilling to go into challenging storylines.
2. Unprofessionalism in film production is another challenge. Filmmakers do not seek to further their professional background. A producer chooses to handle several roles in a film, most times acting as producer, director, and actor so as to manage the small production capital while compressing the production process into a very short time.
3. Filmmaking is considered a trade more than a passion, a career or an art. The major motivation for filmmakers is not to tell stories, break records but just to earn a living and turnover personal funds.
4. The digital transformation has also contributed to the rise of piracy, it is now easy to download, write a DVD and upload films on the internet. "... there was a film (*Dan Marayan Zaki*) printed in China and the CD was coded against copying, but a boy hacked the code for NGN2000 (Mohammed, 2016). The latest digital challenge to filmmakers is the emergence of the '*Yan downloading* (young men who make a living from storing large number of films and songs in laptops and transferring copies to mobile handsets and USB drives at NGN10-20) that can be found in 'download centres' (places you can download softcopies of films, software, music, and other digital content).
5. Influx of foreign content from countries with bigger production budgets, better experience, and equipment which seduces the Nigerian market away from local productions.
6. Nigerian film practitioners are at a crossroad; having identified so many problems that can be solved with the right dedication from government, they claim that those in charge of law enforcement are reluctant to help them secure their investment and boost the industry.

PROSPECTSFOR THE FILM INDUSTRY

The future for the Nigerian video film industry is a promising one. It has the potential of becoming a leading revenue generating industry for the nation in the nearest future. Winnie Kemp, an internationally recognised film expert when asked to comment on Nollywood argues that: "the film and television industry in Nigeria and by default Africa is at the precipice of a global explosion…." Kemp's assertion may be shared by government, investors, and analysts because the Nigerian Government has assented and signed into law the Copyright Act of 2022 on

the 17th of March 2023 and published on official gazette No. 56 Vol 110 on March 27, 2023. The Copyright Act is a feasible achievement for film makers who have battled Blatant Piracy for decades. The previous Copyright law was inadequate with the technologically driven 21st century Nigeria and did not cater to the free sharing and consumption of intellectual property. The Copyright Act 2022 protects the rights of creators of intellectual works, provides limitations and is consistent with international copyright treaties and conventions, and ensures enforcement of the Act by Nigerian Copyright Regulatory Agencies (Businessday.ng, 2023).

The Nigerian Government has also expanded the Ministry of Art, Culture to include Creative Economy (FMACCE), giving importance to the sector. The 9 Point plan unveiled by the Minister includes harnessing and supporting the creative industry to contribute a minimum of (100 billion USD) i.e 10% of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by the year 2030, as well as protecting creative rights and intellectual property under the major theme "**Destination 2023, Nigeria Everywhere**". In the words of the Hannatu Musawa, Minister (FMACCE):

> We have now moved beyond mere interventions; we are now on a trajectory of transformation and acceleration in every facet of our creative sector. The creative industry is the heartbeat of the new economy, serving as an engine of economic growth, a catalyst of change and a generator of employment opportunities. We are uniquely positioned in this great nation, endowed with an abundance of human capital and endless possibilities (Leadership Newspaper, 29/11/23).

Giving credence to the Ministers Statement, is the Federal Government's appointment of practitioners of the film industry as heads the national agencies for film regulation and training which was a major milestone for the Nigerian Film Industry. Abba Al-Mustapha, a Hausa Video film Producer and Actor was appointed as the Executive Secretary of the Hausa film regulatory Kano State Film Censorship Board (KSFCB). Ali Nuhu, a pioneer actor in the Hausa Video Film Industry and a Producer and Director with close to three decades experience in both the Nigerian English and Hausa Film terrain known as *Sarki* (King) by his colleagues, was appointed as Managing Director of the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC). Dr Shuaibu Hussien, another practitioner was also appointed the Managing Director of the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB).

All these point towards increased recognition of the potentials of the film industry and improved commitment on the part of the government to ensure the success of the Nigerian Film Industry. Appointing those with practical experience and providing legal, economic, and political support is all the Nigerian film industry needs to adequately compete with its peers in other countries. However, the industry needs to undergo restructuring in the following areas to further enhance its opportunities for growth:

1. Film regulatory agencies and Professional bodies should emphasize the possession of relevant training and soft skills as conditions for being part of a professional body as well as separation of responsibilities in film production. This will encourage professionalism and gradually, positively impact on the growth of the industry.
2. The conditions binding State and Federal governments' assistance to the film industry in forms of loans and grants should be eased to provide opportunities of growth for budding filmmakers.
3. The open market has destroyed the business of video film production. Films of budding producers that do not meet the criteria for showing in major streaming platforms are

challenged with non-recoupment of investments. Even though there should be freedom of information, a country interested in boosting local production gives precedence to their local products and largely secures the national market. Measures should be taken not to stop, but to check the influx of the Korean, Filipino and other foreign productions. This is necessary to safeguard the existence of the industry that provides employment to many young people and contribute to national GDP. Countries such as India keep making policies to boost the creative industry while others like China practice screen quota to determine how much foreign content gets into the box office; Nigeria must do better to secure the investment of its filmmakers.

4. The Nigerian Copyright Commission and should move beyond just being income generating agency and enforce the Copyright Law 2022 to minimize blatant piracy to the barest minimum.

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