The Impact of Digital Technology on Emerging Film Industries (Lessons from Nigeria)

Ugo Ben Ebelebe

School of Humanities, Languages and Social Science Griffith University

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), January 2017
KEY WORDS

Nollywood
Television
New media
Online distribution
Digital cinema
Nigerian cinema
Digital filmmaking
Crowdfunding
Abstract

The Nigerian film industry is currently experiencing significant structural transformation stimulated by the use of new technologies in its production, distribution and exhibition modes. This research investigates how advances in digital technology are enhancing the aesthetic and narratives of screen content producers in Nigeria in their effort to become relevant in the global marketplace. This thesis will discuss key aspects of digital storytelling in the industry by examining the processes and strategies of ‘new generation’ filmmakers in Nigeria. It will also look at how digital exhibition is reviving the screening of Nigerian films in Multiplex Cinemas using digital projectors with encryption technology, and in what way emerging business models are eliminating the distribution of cheap, easy to copy DVDs – that have plagued the industry – with Nigerian owned digital online platforms such as IROKO TV, and Afrinolly, which are now providing inexpensive and easy access to a vast global audience.

This thesis has a visual component which helps answer the questions raised in this research. The documentary film titled Made in Nollywood is meant to complement the written part of the thesis; thus the two components should be read/viewed together.
Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed) Ugo Ben Ebelebe
**Tables of contents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key words</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of originality</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tables of content</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of tables and figures</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Research questions</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Historical background of cinema in Nigeria:</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1 The evolution of cinema in Nigeria</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.2 Cinema in post-colonial Nigeria</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.3 The emergence of Nollywood</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Chapter outline</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Literature Review</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Understanding film distribution</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Nollywood and global film distribution</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Digital media and networked consumers</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Methodology</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Research design</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1 Case studies</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.2 Interviews</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Visual component: Made in Nollywood</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Chapter summary</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: In the age of digital disruption</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Transition from analog to digital filmmaking</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Digital screening of movies</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Crowdfunding: A new approach to film finance</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 The emergence of Internet-based distribution platforms</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Festival exhibition</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Chapter summary</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Reinventing Nollywood</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Creating the ‘new’ Nollywood cinema</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Producing for the web</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Internet-based funding models</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Chapter summary</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6: Formalising the distribution networks</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Transnational distribution of Nigeria cinema</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Distribution through mobile devices</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 The resurgence of Multiple Cinemas</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 Chapter summary</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 7: Conclusion – The future of Nollywood and the need for policy  91
7.1 Final thoughts  95
7.2 Further research  96

Appendix 1: Ethics committee approval to conduct interviews in Nigeria  98
Appendix 2: Sample of a signed consent form by one of the research participant  99

References  101
# LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

## Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Table Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>List of films made from 1962 – 1990</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>List of research respondents</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>List of the production crew</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>List of the documentary participants</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>List of movies used in the documentary</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>List of Nigerian films screened at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF)</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>List of Nigerian films screened at the Nollywood week in Paris</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>List of movie theatres in Nigeria (November 2016)</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Figure Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kenneth Nnebue’s <em>Living in Bondage</em> (1992)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Obi Emelonye’s <em>Last Flight to Abuja</em> (2012)</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Gidi-Up</em> on Ndani TV</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Jenifa’s Diary on SceneOne TV</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Thy Will Be Done (2014)</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>IROKO TV website in 2016</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>IROKO TV platform on YouTube</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Igbolove on YouTube</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Afrinolly app</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Afrinolly Cinema4Change website</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Filmhouse Imax Cinema at Lekki, Lagos</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

The task of undertaking and completing a PhD is a challenging one, so I would like to thank everyone that contributed towards the success of this project. My deepest gratitude goes to my principal supervisors, Professor Steve Stockwell and Dr Debra Beattie, for all their support through the process of developing, writing and submitting this thesis. Special thanks to my family and Alyson for believing and supporting me throughout the duration of this project. Also, my appreciation goes to my colleagues at Griffith University, but particular thanks go to Frank, Belinda, Chris and Bevan. Thanks to Chris Bowman for helping out with editing the thesis, and to Dr Sarah Baker, Associate Professor Pat Wise and Richard Fabb, for supporting me in different capacities during my research.

The final thesis is dedicated to my late father, Sir Ben Ebelebe.
Chapter 1: Introduction

The cinema of Nigeria has over the years received a lot of attention from scholars across the globe (e.g. Miller 2012, 2016; Lobato 2010; Larkin 2000, 2004, 2005; Haynes 2000, 2016). So much of this interest arises due to the industry’s unique low-budget production and distribution style. The Nigerian film industry often referred to as Nollywood has witnessed increased popularity in the African continent and amongst the African diaspora (Jedlowski 2013, p. 16). As an emerging regional film industry, it has arguably become the most influential in Africa; as Krings and Okome (2013, p. 1) point out, “the Nigerian film industry, has become the most visible form of cultural machine on the African continent”. Many observers have argued (see Ajibade 2013; Becker 2013; Samyn 2013), the success of Nollywood has largely been attributed to the ability of audiences within the African continent and amongst the African diaspora to relate to the stories being told. Storytelling is a very important trait of African culture. As Chike Maduegbuna observes, “we grow up telling stories, we grow up listening to stories; story is how Africans transmit information from one generation to another generation” (2016, pers. comm. 3 October). This research examines how digital technology – the Internet, new media and digital cinematic tools – are creating new prospects for Nigerian screen content creators to tell their stories, and have their stories consumed in the global marketplace.

Presently, substantial discussions about the film industry have been concerned with technological innovation and the opportunities that emanate with it. Whilst these technological advances seem to stimulate a number of radical transformations in film practices worldwide, within the emergent Nigerian film industry, the use of new digital technologies has impacted almost every aspect of the moviemaking practice. Emerging innovative filmic practices are immensely changing the landscape of the aesthetics of both form and content creation for filmmakers. In the area of content distribution, Internet-based platforms are not only eroding the traditional systems, they are fostering new connections between content producers and consumers. As
social networks and global interconnectivity develop networked communities, strong growth in niche markets are creating new opportunities for content creators. As Anderson (2006, p. 6) notes, “the Internet absorbs each industry it touches, becoming store, theatre, and broadcaster at a fraction of the traditional cost”. These critical changes are encouraging filmmakers in Nigeria to invent new techniques and strategies in order to be relevant in a rapidly changing digital environment.

1.1 Research questions

1. What is the current state of filmmaking in Nollywood?
2. What new approaches to screen content production, distribution and exhibition are emerging in Nigeria?
3. How do these emerging trends impact screen content production and circulation in Nigeria?
4. What are the policy implications on the industry?

1.2 Historical background of Cinema in Nigeria

1.2.1 The evolution of cinema in Nigeria

At the beginning of the twentieth century, with most parts of Africa being under various colonial administrations, the art and technology of cinema were imported into the African continent, and subsequently to Nigeria through the structure of colonialism (Okome 1996). Historically, before the introduction of cinema to Nigeria, the local people had an indigenous system that catered to their information, education and entertainment needs. According to Ukadike (1994, p. 22), “they had developed a system of sophisticated communication – the traditional media or oral tradition, including song, dance, folklore, drawing, sculpture, rites, and ceremonies”. However in 1903, about the same time cinema was taken to other parts of the world, Nigeria had its first encounter with cinema. The encounter came in the form of a theatrical exhibition of ‘silent films’ by Messrs Balboa of Barcelona, Spain at Glover Memorial Hall in Lagos, Western Nigeria (Mgbejume 1989). The exhibition received a positive response from the local population as their initial reaction
was “understandably euphoric and the people loved the magic of the moving pictures” (Okome 1996, p. 44). The success of the screening encouraged the influx of other foreign commercial exhibitors, which led to the establishment of more film exhibition centres across major cities in Nigeria. Subsequently, cinema became a common feature of the social life of the indigenous people in Nigeria during the late 1930s and early 1940s (Olubomehin 2012). The British administration in Nigeria during this time played an active role in the advancement of cinema in the country. However, they did not encourage local participation in the filmmaking process. Rather, the colonial authorities predominantly used cinema as a means of promoting its interest in Nigeria as a colony. As (Diawara 1992, p. 1) notes, the creation of the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment in 1935 by the British colonial administration opened the way to explore the possible educational uses of film in African colonies. This experiment primarily made the local people mere spectators in the majority of the screening venues.

The outbreak of the Second World War in Europe led to the establishment of the colonial film unit (CFU) in 1939 with the core aim of producing ‘propaganda’ films for the colonies, showcasing British values and war efforts. The CFU, which was headed at inception by William Sellers, a health official with the Nigerian government, was hugely influential in establishing a network for the distribution and exhibition of colonial films throughout Africa, primarily through mobile cinema vans (Rice 2010). The propaganda films, which were mostly made in Europe and America, were constantly modified in order to achieve the desired effect with the African audience (Diawara 1992, p. 3). The film Mr. English at Home (1940) was the first of such wartime productions that presented the British life to African audiences. Other films in this category are Africa’s Fighting Men (1943), Plainsmen of Barotseland (1943), and Basuto Troops on Active Service (1945); these were some of the other war propaganda films produced and shown vividly to the local people during the Second World War (Rice 2010). In 1945, the end of the Second World War signalled a new phase for CFU, and attention shifted towards the production of Instructional cinema for the colonies (Smyth 1992). According to Shaka (1999, p. 27), “the introduction of instructional cinema in colonial Africa was
borne out of the desire to use the film medium as a vehicle for instruction, social mobilisation, and community development efforts”. William Sellers, who was in charge of CFU at that time, pioneered the use of the Instructional cinema medium. He first adopted this approach in his film *Anti-Plague Operations, Lagos* (1937). Sellers also championed a specialised film technique, which he based on the racial and cultural assumptions about the cognitive capabilities of the African audiences. According to Sellers, “it is not always appreciated that viewing a film starts up quite a number of mental processes which with a trained mind function automatically but are nevertheless essential in order to appreciate and understand the various scenes which go to make a film” (Sellers 1953, p. 830). The technique, which precluded the use of close-ups, crosscutting, short scenes and excessive movement within frame, would later dominate colonial filmmaking for over two decades.


The growth of cinema in colonial Nigeria also experienced the combined efforts of European missionaries and foreign commercial exhibitors. During this period, “the missionaries seeking to convert Africans were not only armed with copies of the Holy Bible but also with film and slide projectors, which were used to facilitate the understanding of their evangelical crusade”
For the missionaries, their motivation was to create a new religious order in the supposedly barren cultural landscape of the ‘natives’ and to propagate the religious doctrine of one God, something quite alien to the indigenous population (Okome 1996, p. 46). The missionaries used mobile cinema vans to screen mainly feature films with biblical themes to the indigenous people.

The commercial exhibitors operated through showings in the big halls, mobile cinema vans and film theatres, with films brought in through the British Council in London and the Crown Film Unit (Olayiwola 2011). The activities of the commercial exhibitors were driven more by economic gains rather than ideological purposes. Unlike the films shown by the colonial authorities which had moral themes, the exhibitors were more interested in screening films that attracted large crowds at the screening venues. Most of their screenings had excessive violent, passionate romance and gangster scenes, however the films were popular with the local people (Okome 1996). The activities of the commercial exhibitors coupled with the colonial government’s intention of controlling negative publicity and unwanted information during the Second World War influenced the government’s decision to set up a Board of Censorship in 1937 under Ordinance No. 28 (an amendment to the Cinematography Ordinance of 1933) to handle all matters relating to the establishment and operations of commercial theatres in the colony (Olubomehin 2012, p. 2). However, at the end of the war there was a significant increase in the inflow of foreign films into the country. By 1951, there were many commercial theatres showing films in Nigeria to large audiences, with an estimated annual attendance of 3,500,000 (Mgbejume 1989, p. 55). Commercial distributors persuaded the colonial administration to relax its tough polices on the film distribution and exhibition. In 1962, the American Motion Picture Export Company (Africa) (AMPEC), which comprised the eight Hollywood majors that formed the Motion Picture Export Association, namely Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer; Paramount Pictures; 20th Century-Fox Film Corporation; RKO Pictures; Warner Bros; Universal Pictures; United Artists, and Columbia Pictures opened its office in Lagos (Obiaya 2011). The exhibition and distribution of films in the country during
this time was clearly dominated by foreign businessmen; they imported films from the United States, Britain, China, Hong Kong, and India (Olubomehin 2012; Ukadike 1994). AMPEC controlled the inflow of Hollywood and European cinema, while NDO Films and CINE Films specialised in Indian, Egyptian and Chinese cinema.

1.2.2 Cinema in post-colonial Nigeria

The colonial influence on cinema in Nigeria continued to the 1960s when Nigerians were able to achieve political independence. With an indigenous government in place, there was an increasing need among Nigerian filmmakers to redefine the geographical entity called Nigeria and build a new national consciousness detached from the colonial framework (Olayiwola 2011). However, advancing this new ideology became a relatively difficult undertaking. The local filmmakers had to contend with a colonial filmmaking legacy which brought along with it such problems as the absence of an infrastructure for feature filmmaking, funding difficulties, a lack of adequately trained personnel, inaccessible distribution channels, and an unsupportive government (Obiaya 2011). The challenges associated with sourcing film equipment and the non-availability of sufficient film processing laboratories in Nigeria hindered the growth of local film production using celluloid technology. Unsurprisingly, in the history of indigenous filmmaking in Nigeria – documentary as well as fiction – only a handful of films have been made in 35mm gauge

The filming of Son of Africa in 1970 signalled the beginning of indigenous feature film production in Nigeria. However, the film, which was co-produced by Segun Olusola with some Lebanese businessmen, did not go down in history as the ‘first Nigerian fictional feature film’; the film stirred up enormous disputes as some people thought that the Nigerian contribution was too minimal to merit such a prestigious title (Diawara 1992, p. 7; Ukadike 1994, p. 144). Francis Oladele was then credited as the pioneer of indigenous film production in Nigeria. Oladele’s company Calpeny Nigeria Films Limited co-produced Kongi’s Harvest (1970), a film directed by an African-American, Ossie Davis. Kongi’s Harvest which was an adaptation of a play by Wole
Soyinka, a Nigerian playwright and Nobel Laureate then became the ‘first Nigerian fictional feature film’ (Ukadike 1994, p. 144). In 1972, Oladele produced his second feature film *Bullfrog in the Sun* (1972) which was an adaptation of two novels – *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease* – written by Chinua Achebe. The film was directed by a German Hansjurgen Pohland. Oladele’s attempt to produce a film that was commercially successful at the box office was unrewarded. According to Opubor and Nwuneli (1979, p. 9), *Kongi’s Harvest* failed “partly because the non-Nigerians who hold the monopoly on the distribution of films refused to handle the film”.

The activities of the foreign commercial exhibitors in Nigeria such as the American Motion Pictures Exporters and Cinema Association (AMPECA) and the Lebanese owned NDO Films and Cine Films created enormous challenges for indigenous filmmakers. As Enahora (1989, p. 100) notes, the “foreigners decide the films to be screened in Nigerian theatres”. Notwithstanding, the indigenisation policy of 1972 which gave exclusive monopoly for the distribution and exhibition of feature films to Nigerians, the foreign exhibitors merely obtained Nigerian citizenship or used Nigerian fronts to continue their operations. For example, The West African Pictures Company (WAPCO) was established in 1930 by a Lebanese but was bought over in 1960 by Chief Doherty (a Nigerian). It was later taken over by the OUDA Investment through the National Bank of Nigeria. In 1965, the Nigerian Motion Pictures Company was established, by an Indian before it was indigenised in 1974 through the Federal Government indigenisation decree. Plateau Cinemas was another major distribution company owned by a naturalised Lebanese businessman. The company controlled over 80 percent of film distribution and exhibition outlets in the northern states of Nigeria, this included Kano, Kaduna, Sokoto, Jos, Maiduguri and Katsina. It also had strong holds in the southern states. Star Cinema Nigeria Limited was another major distribution inlet of foreign films owned by Yusuf Soufan, a naturalised Lebanese. The company had fifteen branches nationwide with its head office in Lagos. It distributed mainly Indian and Chinese films. The company had not distributed any Nigerian film since 1976 when it was nationalised. In theory, the above distribution companies were Nigerian companies, but in practice,
their operational strategies were foreign. It is therefore easy to understand why many Nigerians developed taste for foreign films. In fact, many indigenous filmmakers in western Nigeria, imitated Indian film stylistics of dance and music, to attract audiences. The strangulation of the local industry by these foreign distribution companies was evident in Enugu (Eastern Nigeria), where the four cinemas houses: Metro, Rio, Crystal and Hotel Presidential Cinemas, closed down because they belonged to the Cinema Complex Nigeria Limited chain, a local distribution company with no foreign partnership or origin. When notable filmmaker Ola Balogun commenced his experiment with the Yoruba Travelling theatre, they cut off these distribution cartels by taking their films directly to community halls to screen. Alternatively, they paid for the use of cinema halls and screened their films themselves on set fees. In this way, they controlled their films and avoided piracy.

The Yoruba travelling theatre practitioners contributed immensely to the evolution of indigenous cinema in Nigeria, especially after the successful experiment of Ola Balogun by transposing traditional theatres into films in local languages. Whilst exploring his approach of filming in local languages with the success of *Amadi* in 1975 made with Igbo language, Balogun went on to co-produce the first Yoruba film *Ajani Ogune* in 1975 with Duro Ladipo, a prominent member of the Yoruba travelling theatre. Balogun also worked with other prominent Yoruba theatrical performers such as Hubert Ogunde, Adeyemi Folayan, and Moses Olaiya Adejumo. After their co-production with Balogun, members of the Yoruba travelling theatre went on to produce films of their own (Obiaya 2011). Hubert Ogunde produced *Jaiyesimi* in 1980, and *Aropin N’tenia* in 1981; Adeyemi Folayan produced *Kadara* in 1982, *Ija Orogun* in 1983, and *Taxi Driver* in 1983; while Moses Olaiya produced *Are Agbaye* in 1983. The cultural affinity associated with these films accounted for the patronage by audiences mainly from the western part of the country. The linguistic difference between those from the west and the rest of the country, coupled with different cultural tropes used in these performances, limited the national appeal of these movies to mostly Yoruba speaking Nigerians. Another indigenous filmmaker that advanced cinema in Nigeria after independence was Eddie Ugbomah. He was actively involved in the

From the period of 1962-1990, an estimated 120 feature films were made, many of which are in 16mm or reversal stock, an average of three feature films every year (Okome, 1996, p. 60). Some of the films are listed in Table 1 below:

**Table 1: List of films made from 1962-1990**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Filmmaker</th>
<th>Title / Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Segun Olusola</td>
<td><em>Son of Africa</em> (1970)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis Oladele</td>
<td><em>Kongi’s Harvest</em> (1971)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Bullfrog in the Sun</em> (1972)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eddie Ugbomah</td>
<td><em>The Rise and Fall of Dr. Oyenusi</em> (1977),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Films</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanya Dosunmu</td>
<td>Dinner with the Devil (1975)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jab Adu</td>
<td>Bisi, Daughter of the River (1976)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segun Oyekunle</td>
<td>Parcel Post (1982)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wole Soyinka</td>
<td>Blues for a Prodigal (1984)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayo Ogundipe</td>
<td>The Song Bird (1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adeyemi Folayan</td>
<td>Kadara (1982), Ija Orogun (1983), and Taxi Driver (1983)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Ukadike</td>
<td>Turning Point (1980), Him Don Die (1982)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The growth of cinema in Nigeria suffered a major setback due to the economic recession in the 1980s which was triggered by the drop in global oil prices. The drastic decline in revenue and external reserves led to the widespread scarcity of funds, consequently, many filmmakers did not have regular employment due to unavailability of funds for film projects. As Adesanya (2000, p. 40) points out, since most production and post-production
overheads had to be paid in foreign currency due to the importation of most film equipment and processing of films overseas, the resultant effect was a drain on the country’s external reserves. The absence of financial support or grants from the government to filmmakers to help cushion the effect of recession inhibited the development of the art of filmmaking in Nigeria. Furthermore, the problems of absence of distribution network for indigenous films, inadequate infrastructural facilities such as roads, power, and hostile government policies also contributed to the downturn of the industry. However, the desire to sustain the film audience and remain relevant in the motion picture business encouraged indigenous filmmakers to adopt an approach that facilitated the transition from celluloid to video format.

The commencement of television transmission in Nigeria also contributed in no small measure towards the growth of indigenous film production; the medium attracted a large audience from all the over the country. The introduction of television provided local filmmakers with a viable platform for content distribution and exhibition. The Western Nigeria Television Service (WNTV) Ibadan, established on October 31, 1959, became the first operational television station in Nigeria and on the continent of Africa (Umeh 1989). In the early years of Nigerian television, the studios functioned along with the film divisions, whose films, notably documentaries, made a major impact on programming (Ukadike 1994, p. 115). The oil boom of the 1970s heralded the creation of more states within Nigeria and the establishment of television stations that came to be known as the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), now numbering well over thirty-seven stations (Ukadike 1994, p. 114). NTA played a significant role in the development of the local film industry. Many of the production and acting crew in the early stages of the Nigerian video-film industry came from the NTA. For example, Chris Obi Rapu, who directed Living in Bondage (1992), retired from the NTA.

1.2.3 The emergence of Nollywood

The transition from celluloid to video format in Nigeria occurred when Nigerian cinema was at its formative stage, going by various accounts, different factors contributed to the advent of video-film production in Nigeria (see Miller 2016,
Haynes 2000, Adesanya 2000). According to Haynes (2000, p. 1), video-films are “something between television and cinema”. As early as 1986, the use of video format in movie production became prevalent amongst indigenous filmmakers operating in the western states of Nigeria. Movies such as *Sonso Meji* (1988) produced by Ade Ajiboye, and *Ekun* shot in 1986 but released in 1989 by Muyideen Alade Aromire, were amongst the first set of video-films produced in Nigeria (Haynes 2016). The Yoruba theatre practitioners were also active during this period, experimenting with video format as an alternative to celluloid technology. As Miller (2016) notes, “by most accounts, these Yoruba video films are the most immediate predecessors of today’s Nollywood films” (Miller 2016, chapter 1, section 3, para 1). The term Nollywood has been used to describe the ruptures in the control of the means of production, distribution and exhibition.

The commercial success of Kenneth Nnebue’s *Living in Bondage* (1992) which was shot in the Igbo language stimulated the video film industry in Nigeria, which later metamorphosed into what is known today as *Nollywood*. Nnebue, a business man had earlier in 1991 worked with Oguntade, a Yoruba movie director, to co-produced some video-films in Yoruba. Some of the movies include *Aje Ni Iya Mi* (1991) and *Olorogun* (1991). At inception, Nollywood movies were directly distributed to markets through VHS cassettes, then VCD and DVD as technology improved. The local population enthusiastically embraced these Nollywood movies as the films offered them the opportunity to enjoy, in the comfort of their homes, visual contents that were peculiar to their own realities and environment. Initially, the target audience was to be found in one-room screening centres and mushroom halls equipped with a television set and VHS player; gradually the video business made inroads into Idumota market, Lagos, where it found patrons who desired home entertainment (Adesanya 2000, p. 42). With the straight-to-video (STV) model, the businessmen who funded the productions circulated the movies through their own trading channels and they were not dependent on the theatrical release of the video-films. This development adversely affected the number of people that visited various film theatres across the country, thus prompting a change in the film culture of audiences in Nigeria.
Nollywood content grew exponentially within the African continent and across the African diaspora, dispersed all over the globe. As Eno Akpabio suggests, “the popularity of Nollywood could be attributed to the ability of the present-day filmmakers to emphasise contemporary realities which many Nigerians and Africans can relate to” (Akpabio 2007, p. 91). The themes of most Nollywood movies usually focus on contemporary social issues like conflicts, religion, poverty, romance, marriage, betrayal, witchcraft, gender equality etc. Additionally, the traditional distribution model of Nollywood – bypassing theatrical exhibition in favour of the informal circuits – was also crucial to its advancement (Lobato 2010). Also, the African Magic satellite television channels owned by the multi-layered South African Conglomerate Naspers/Multichoice/ DStv, contributed immensely to the spread of Nollywood content amongst film audiences in the African continent. The economy of Nollywood was deeply affected by the activities of the media corporation that is arguably one of the largest corporate players in content distribution in Africa.

Nevertheless, the industry is currently experiencing a decline in its home video boom, as revenue streams for producers and distributors dwindle due to poor regulation and piracy/informal networks (see Made in Nollywood min. 16.05 – 16.20). This development has produced a number of consequences that are importantly transforming the video industry’s economic structure, making videos move toward a progressive remediation into different media formats (Jedlowski 2012). Within this context, pre-existing media formats such as television and theatrical releases have come back into the limelight. As Ryan (2015, p. 55) acknowledges, “the sophisticated films of New Nollywood reach out to transitional and metropolitan audiences by bypassing the grassroots home video markets in favour of new distribution windows, including satellite television, streaming video websites, video on-demand, in-flight entertainment, and especially theatres in West Africa and the diaspora. With the current growth of Nollywood, the future looks promising as the steadily growing Nigerian filmed entertainment sector will be worth a forecast US$295 million by 2019 (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2015).
1.3 Chapter outline

Chapter two contains the literature survey of relevant scholarly works that specifically consider the current state of screen content production and distribution in Nigeria, whilst noting that most academic research on the industry rarely studies the significance of digital technology to the making of the new Nollywood film. Most academic work on emerging filmic practices or innovative distribution models more generally tends to focus on Hollywood,
Bollywood, and/or other emerging film industries from the East. The Chapter identifies the research gap, which justifies the need for this study and also offers an insight into the theoretical sources that inform my conceptual framework for this research. Chapter three outlines my methodological approaches for investigating the research questions. The chapter is divided into two sections; the first examines the appropriate methodological process for examining the working practices of industry practitioners in Nigeria through interviews and case studies. The second section discusses at length the visual component of the study, which involved the production of a documentary film, titled *Made in Nollywood*. Chapter four explores significant transformations occurring in the film industry. The chapter provides a baseline for further discussion in other chapters, five and six, about the emerging trends in the Nigerian film industry. The findings of chapter four indicate that a culture of innovation in film practice is emerging, driven by opportunities offered by advances in digital cinematic technologies. I argue in this chapter that with the digitalisation of the filmmaking and distribution process, a culture of an innovative approach to screen production is emerging in Nollywood driven by new generation tech-savvy filmmakers. Chapter five analyses specific emergent trends in Nollywood that are changing the industry’s economy, aesthetics and narrative features. The findings of chapter five indicate that emergent cinematic technologies are creating opportunities for Nigerian storytellers and also enhancing the aesthetics and narrative innovation of the Nollywood content. The chapter argues that digital technology is expanding the art and craft of filmmaking in Nollywood, thus creating opportunities for Nigerian storytellers to invent innovative ways to tell their stories and be competitive in the global marketplace. Chapter six outlines some case studies that provide an insight into the change occurring in the distribution and exhibition of Nollywood content and then explores the factors driving the change. The findings of chapter six indicate there is a deliberate effort by industry stakeholders to formalise Nollywood’s distribution network. I argue in this chapter that Internet-based distribution and digital exhibition are offering innovative ways to circulate Nollywood content in both domestic and international markets. Chapter seven is the conclusion of the thesis. It draws together all of the chapter arguments and makes recommendations for the
Nigerian government and the industry. It also examines possible avenues for future enquiry that lead on from this thesis. In doing so it is acknowledged that, despite the contribution made by this thesis to the field, academic study on emerging film industries still remains an under-researched area.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Understanding Film distribution

When you take into account the significant role of distribution in the cinematic process, the absence of a comprehensive body of work is worrisome. It is evident that scholarly research on distribution is still in its infancy. A quick survey of available academic work on distribution indicates that the field is under-researched. According to Ramon Lobato, in his doctoral thesis ‘Subcinema: mapping informal film distribution’ (2009), “film distribution is an underdeveloped area of research, especially when compared to other topics in film scholarship” (Lobato 2009, p. 25). He concludes by saying, “film distribution tends to be a difficult and unglamorous thing to research” (Lobato 2009, p. 25). In Nigeria, an important reason for the paucity of studies devoted exclusively to film distribution is primarily due to the activities of the informal sector marketers that control screen content distribution in the country. These small-scale marketers detest conservations with researchers and are deliberately opaque in their business dealings. Scholars such as Jade Miller (2016), Jonathan Haynes (2016), and Ramon Lobato (2012), have provided insights into the informal distribution networks in the Nigerian film industry.

Distribution transcends the ‘mere’ process through which films are transferred from producers to consumers. In Julia Knight and Peter Thomas’ paper, ‘Distribution and the question of diversity: a case study of Cinenova’ (2008), they suggest that “the term ‘distribution’ is often still perceived to refer simply to the physical means by which a film is transported from its distributor to an exhibitor” (Knight & Thomas 2008, p. 354). They argue that “distributors play a crucial role in determining what we as audiences get to see and hence in helping to shape our film culture” (Knight & Thomas 2008). Sean Cubitt’s essay ‘Distribution and media flows’ (2005) offers an analysis of distribution. Cubitt considers distribution as “that function which organises information in space and time, accelerating or delaying its delivery in spaces that it differentiates on that basis” (Cubitt 2005, p. 194). He argues that distribution is more than a ‘delivery process’, suggesting that there is also an
informational aspect to it. According to Cubitt, not only does distribution bring content to audiences, the cash flow returning to the producers is a vital data confirming the performance of the product in the marketplace. This ‘feedback loop’ helps determine how products are produced, handled and consumed. Himpele (2008) points out that film distribution is not a ‘passive conduit’ but rather an ‘active medium’ between consumption and production (Himpele 2008, p. 47). According to Himpele, film distribution is active in several senses:

First, it is an institutional practice of mediation that guides films between production and exhibition. Second, it is a medium of social discourse, composed of spatial plots and temporal narratives and events into which people insert themselves as mobile subjects. Third, as a spatializing practice, distribution entails an infrastructure that is discursive and material at once, through which people are propelled and channelled toward sites that conjoin social space, film and publics. (Himpele 2008, p. 47)

In the global film industry, the big Hollywood studios seem to grab the attention of most scholars who conduct research about film distribution (for example see Puttnam et al. 1997; Wasko 1982, 1994; Schatz 2009; Balio 2002; Gomery 2005). Researchers have produced thorough analyses of the economic power and leverage of these studios. Major film corporations like Universal, Disney, Warner, Fox, Sony, and Paramount have, through their multinational operations, direct control and domination of distribution systems in all their principal foreign markets, as well as in many more secondary markets (Scott 2004, p. 178). Whilst research work in this area is undoubtedly valuable, it is also significant that we understand how other global film industries operate. In his book *The International Film Business* (2010), Augus Finney points out that, “Whilst it is understandable why academic research is drawn to the studios - who offer quantitative data and historical trends in abundance - what is left untended is the international film industry as practiced and experienced by all outside” (Finney 2010, p. xii). Finney
suggests that this trend has “created a considerable knowledge gap” (2010, p. xii). In order to understand how distribution practices in emerging film industries such as Nollywood shape the film culture of audiences. Ramon Lobato (2012) argues that we need to “focus our attention on informal systems of film circulation, including pirate networks” (Lobato 2012, p. 1). Lobato opens up the study of “media industries to an array of informal channels that are rarely documented and which may or may not be categorised as distribution networks from the vantage point of industry research and policy” (2012, p. 2). He suggests that informal distributors have played a vital role in film culture, so models of distribution analysed in film studies must therefore encompass not just the major studios and established independents but also a wide variety of individuals, organisations and virtual publics operating at the edges of – or entirely outside – the legal movie industry (Lobato 2012, p. 2). Currently, there are scholars who research cinema from a global perspective, such as Wada-Marciano (2012), Dwyer (2007), Lent (1990), Mantecon (2003), Iordanova (2012), Curtin (2007), and Pinon (2011). These researchers have explored how local, regional, and global distribution networks are structured and how content flows through various regions.

2. 2 Nollywood and Global Film distribution

The Nigerian film industry has been receiving much scholarly attention in the past few years, and much of this interest arises from the popularity of its cinema within the African continent and the African diaspora. A cursory survey of existing academic literature on Nigerian cinema denotes that there is a growing body of work on the industry. Unfortunately, a vast majority of this work offers compelling accounts of Nigerian’s video and its aesthetic, social and political contexts (Lobato 2010, p. 339), which is not very significant to this study (for example see Haynes 1995, 2000; Okome 2000, 2010; Krings 2010; Ukadike 1994; McCall 2007). Studying a regional emerging film industry such as Nollywood from a technological perspective requires a fusion of approaches. For example, in Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano’s work *Japanese Cinema in the Digital Age* (2012), she adopts an approach that goes beyond a
simple cultural interpretation by structuring her inquiry of contemporary Japanese film around questions of technological change. In the book, Wada-Marciano examines how technological advances, especially “the new media, primarily computer and digital technologies have impacted the flow of cinema culture, especially in the global commodification of such regional genre films” (Wada-Marciano 2012, p. 1). According to Wada-Marciano, “the notion of global cinema has been changing dramatically in the last two decades due to the increasing ubiquity of digital technology” (Wada-Marciano 2012, p. 1).

The dominant role of Hollywood in global cinema has functioned for over a century, orchestrated by the major Hollywood studios such as Walt Disney pictures, Warner Bros Pictures, 20th Century Fox, Universal Pictures, Sony (Columbia/Tristar), Paramount Pictures and MGM/UA (Silver & Alpert 2003). Dina Iordanova, in her essay ‘Digital disruption: technological innovation and global film circulation’ (2012), focuses on the ‘cinematic experience’ that is being conditioned by digital innovation. Iordanova argues that “traditional distribution – where studios control box office revenues by releasing films for coordinated showing in a system of theatres and then direct them through an inflexible succession of hierarchically ordered windows of exhibition and formats – is radically undermined by new technologies” (Iordanova 2012, p. 1).

In the concept of the ‘Long Tail’, explored by Chris Anderson initially in a 2004 article for Wired and later expanded into the book The Long Tail: Why the future of business is selling less of more (2006), “niches are emerging as the next big market” (Anderson 2006, p. 8). Digital technologies are inventing new ways for audiences to access content (Anderson 2006). The logic of the ‘Long Tail’ economy has three governing principles, namely enhanced availability, low prices, and effective search mechanisms (Anderson 2006).

Whilst the ‘Long Tail’ model has its limitations, the concept nonetheless provides a background for understanding recent developments in global film distribution and the media and entertainment industries.

networks in production and distribution’ (2012), is a study conducted on the industrial structure of Nollywood. Miller posits that the Nigerian film industry is “virtually invisible” to the international mainstream film audience due to its informality, “but throughout Sub-Saharan Africa and the global African diaspora, the cinema is not just known, but known as a dominant force” (Miller 2012, p. 118). She argues “that this renders Nollywood as situated in an alternative media capital, central to alternative networks, while too informal to integrate into dominant networks” (Miller 2012, p. 117). This notion best describes Nollywood’s current position in global media flows. Ramon Lobato’s ‘Creative industries and informal economies: lessons from Nollywood’ (2010), analyses the Nollywood phenomenon through the lens of debate in creative industries research. Using Nollywood as a case study, he pursued his distinct line of inquiry into the transnational dimensions of creative industries. Lobato argues that “various efficient and economically sustainable industry models already exist in Second and Third World media, even though many of these are informal in nature and are only minimally connected to circuits of international intellectual property (IP) trade” (Lobato 2010, p. 338).

The influence of informal networks in the circulation of Nollywood content is further discussed in Alessandro Jedlowski’s essay ‘From Nollywood to Nollyworld: Processes of transnationalization in the Nigerian video film industry’ (2013). He observes that “media piracy and transnational informal circulation made Nigerian films travel all over Africa and the world, transforming them into a pan-African and global form of popular culture” (Jedlowski 2013, p. 31). Becker (2013) provides a far-reaching insight about the transnational popularity of Nollywood content among Africans and the African diaspora. In the study, which is about the reception of Nigerian films in Southern Africa, Becker points out that, “Nollywood has become a major source of African identification in post-colonies such as South Africa and Namibia” (Becker 2013, p. 193). Becker argues that Nigerian film, through its transnational circuits, constitutes a brand of cultural pan-Africanism on-screen (2013, p. 182). With increasing global spectatorship, Nigerian filmmakers are beginning to rethink their “transnational audiences as part of the narrative and production equation” (Ajibade 2013, p. 264). Furthermore, as advances in
technology stimulate new approaches to distribution, screen content producers in Nigeria are now intensifying efforts to formalise their operations as they see the transnational film audiences as potential consumers. The need to understand the role of new technologies in the distribution processes and practices of practitioners in Nollywood has necessitated greater interrogation. The following section will detail such work that is of particular interest to this thesis.

2.3 Digital media and networked consumers

In an era of global connectivity and social networks, the inclusion of new media in this thesis has allowed me to consider important issues around the new media revolution, and how these trends are influencing the future of the Nigerian film industry. When having a discussion around new media, there is “a temptation to simply list the latest development in media technologies and call these new” (Flew 2008, p. 1). Flew argues that this approach is “inadequate, partly because the rate of change in media technologies, services, and uses is so rapid that any list of this sort will quickly become dated” (2008, p. 1). New media has become a critical and contested field of study, partly due to constant technological advances and media changes. Sometimes we are tempted to tie a discussion of ‘new media’ around the latest developments in media technologies at the particular time of writing.

Lev Manovich’s pioneering work *The Language of New Media* (2001) offers an indispensable guide to mapping the emergent terrain of ‘new media’ and its complex relations with older media environments. Manovich approaches new media from both a formal and historical perspective; he locates new media within the long historical evolution of modern visual media, tracing out its continuities with earlier cultural forms (print, painting, photography and cinema). Manovich argues that what puts the ‘new’ in ‘new media’ is its digitalisation, i.e. the translation of all media into the digital binary codes of programming. The computer media revolution affects all stages of communication, including acquisition, manipulation, storage, and distribution; it also affects all types of media – texts, still images, moving images, sound, and spatial constructions (Manovich 2001, p. 19). Recognising a new era in
communication, Manovich observes, “we are in the middle of a new media revolution due to the shift of all of our culture to computer-mediated forms of production, distribution and communication” (2001, p. 19). The long-standing question of whether or not a media technology has the power to transform a culture has been given a very high profile with the development of new media (Lister et al. 2002, p. 77). Lister et al. argue that neither culture nor (new) media can definitively be considered the key catalyst for change. The complexity of such relationships instead demands a focus on how they interact within distinct contexts.

Within the global film industry, the dynamics of screen content circulation has “undergone a veritable revolution in the twenty-first century, overthrowing the institutional relationships, cultural hierarchies, and conventional business models” (Curtin et al, 2014, p. 2). In the book *Distribution Revolution: Conversations about the digital future of film and television* (2014), Curtin et al. point out that widespread technological innovations have made the traditional strategy of staggering releases of different formats, such as cinema exhibition, rental and sale look obsolete in the digital age (2014, p. 2). When considering the ready availability of screen content online, screen content creators must radically realign their business models around fresh modes of delivery or risk losing their audience to a host of new rivals in the digital space. The role of new digital technologies in the distribution process influences not just what film audiences see and how they see it, but also how films are developed, produced and sold (Franklin 2012). Jade Miller in her book *Nollywood Central* (2014), provides an insight into Nollywood’s global satellite television and online distribution. She offers a compelling case study of online distribution of Nollywood content. Miller suggests, “Internet-based distribution – mostly streaming services – are particularly and increasingly popular with Nollywood’s audiences in places where fans are likely to have the ability to easily stream full-length movies without data or power interruption (i.e. outside Nigeria and much of sub-Saharan Africa)” (Miller, 2016. Chapter 5, section 5, para 1). It is evident, that the influence of digital technologies on content distribution in Nigeria are creating prospects for filmmakers and potentially offering access to a vast global audience.
As the Internet’s digital network appears to offer cost-effective means to promote screen content and sell into global markets, Manuel Castells’ trilogy of the ‘Information Age’ published from 1996-1998 offers some insight into the rise of the network society. This is a society where technology has linked economies together. Castells’ work represents one of the most significant attempts to understand how technology, the economy and society are changing. He suggests that since information and knowledge have always been central to societies, the real breakthrough for modern culture has been the development of networks. Consequently, filmmakers have been able to use these online networks to develop, fund, and circulate screen contents. By facilitating these kinds of activities, online networks have allowed distribution to become increasingly social and service-oriented, which has, in turn, created the need to develop new business models. Finola Kerrigan (2010) and Chuck Tryon (2009) have both published major works on how established filmmakers and emerging filmmakers are accessing audiences directly through the Internet as an alternative to the theatrical system.

The interactive online and social media environment has created new challenges and opportunities for film distribution. Media convergence is resulting in the flow of content across multiple platforms, and the online marketplace is becoming increasingly important for access to transnational audiences. Henry Jenkins’ seminal study Convergence Culture: Where old and new media collide (2006) has informed and directed a significant proportion of the discussion of media convergence, alongside the author’s earlier journal article ‘The cultural logic of media convergence’ (2004). Jenkins examines the relationship between three concepts: ‘media convergence, participatory culture, and collective intelligence’. In his text, he defines convergence as “the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want” (Jenkins 2004, p. 2). Jenkins argues that new media technologies have allowed consumers to become more visible
and influential on industry structures and media content. Therefore by enabling people to actively seek out new information and make connections across a range of content on the web, convergence has made it easy for audiences to personalise content and contribute to media culture.

In conclusion, this chapter has provided a comprehensive literature review of the theoretical sources that inform my conceptual framework for this research. The chapter also offers an insight into the current state of Nollywood as an emerging film industry, whilst noting that most academic research on the industry rarely studies the significance of digital technology to its production and distribution models. The following chapter will take the reader into the different methodological approaches that were applied in order to examine the research questions.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Design

As this research is concerned with investigating the disruption caused by the appropriation of digital technology by filmmakers in Nollywood, a number of different methodological approaches were applied in order to gain a better understanding of the industry. This chapter is divided into two sections: the first examines the appropriate methodology for examining the processes and strategies of industry practitioners in Nigeria through interviews and case studies; the second section explores the approach used in the visual component of the thesis. There were several questions that guided this research and they were developed to examine the phenomenon of digital disruption within the framework of content creation and circulation in Nollywood. I explored these emerging trends driven by new generation filmmakers in Nigeria by asking: What is the current state of filmmaking in Nollywood? What new approaches to screen content production, distribution and exhibition are emerging in Nigeria? How do these emerging trends impact screen content production and circulation in Nigeria? What are the policy implications on the industry?

This research applied a phenomenological approach to the examination of current cinematic trends in Nollywood, especially as they impact on content production, distribution and exhibition. My research methods were primarily qualitative. The choice of a qualitative methodology is influenced by the ability of this research to tap into the reality of the current situation and to provide complex textual descriptions of how the research respondents experience the research topic. As a Nigerian documentary filmmaker with an intrinsic understanding of what prospects and challenges exist for stakeholders in the Nigerian film industry. The ultimate aim of this research is to offer a perspective of a situation and provide well-written research reports that reflect the researcher’s ability to illustrate or describe the corresponding phenomenon. Furthermore, studying how industry practitioners are inventing innovative filmmaking techniques and developing viable business models in a changing digital environment, implies that the knowledge contained in this
thesis can be practically applied, therefore, the significance of this research goes beyond its theoretical contributions. Although this research was driven more by practical rather than theoretical aims, I intended for this thesis to appeal to both movie industry practitioners and the academic community.

3.1.1 Case studies

The use of a case study method in research embraces the full set of procedures needed to examine a phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin 2012; Guest et al. 2013). In this research, an exploration of the methodological strengths and challenges associated with the use of case study approach has offered this study – which investigated the key aspects of emergent film practices and viable digital trends in screen content circulation in Nigeria – rich and in-depth information. There are intensive processes involved when collecting research data in case studies (Merriam 1998). These processes include designing a case study, collecting the study’s data, analysing the data, and presenting and reporting the results (Yin 2012). In this ‘case’, the research data was collected through multiple methods and multiple data sources such as direct observations, semi-structured interviews, documents and archival records. The multiple-case design was used to ensure that the data could provide greater confidence in the findings of the research. The in-depth focus of case study method on research subjects offers the “capacity to explore, describe and/or explain the case of interest, and enable in-depth, meaningful and context-constituted knowledge and understanding about real life events” (Taylor & Thomas-Gregory 2015, p. 36, citing Luck et al. 2006). When searching for my case studies in this research, I considered how each case or experiment would examine the core research questions. Fundamentally, each case study needed to have a strong connection to the Nigerian film industry.

When I commenced this research, each case study offered an excellent approach to explore the real-life experiences and situation. I was interested in both the phenomenon and the context in which it occurs. The study analysed specific trends in Nollywood that were changing the industry’s economic,
aesthetic and narrative features. Consequently, in chapter five I examined two films Obi Emelonye’s *Last flight to Abuja* (2012) and Daniel Oriahi’s *Taxi Driver: Oko Ashewo* (2016) to explore the aesthetic and narrative innovation of the industry. The case studies provided me with an opportunity to examine the multiple possibilities as well as challenges offered by new technologies. As filmmakers in Nigeria operate in a changing environment of global connectivity and online communities, the Internet is connecting filmmakers directly with audiences and also expanding the ways in which these filmmakers could tell their stories. Using two popular Nigerian online web series *Gidi Up* and *Jenifa’s Diary* afforded me the chance to explore how the Internet is changing the face of storytelling in Nollywood. Traditionally, the absence of viable funding options for screen production in Nigeria has always been a barrier for many filmmakers. However, Internet-based funding models could present a viable and sustainable model of sourcing funds for film projects. Three case studies – *Thy Will Be Done* (2014), *African Time aka African Booty Scratcher* (2016) a sitcom, and *The Boy from Mushin* (2016) a feature length documentary – allowed me to understand innovative funding partnerships in Nollywood and also explore how Nigerian producers are engaging digital tools in creating innovative models to fund film projects.

In chapter six, in order to have a holistic understanding of how the Internet, digital media, and digital cinematic devices are disrupting screen content distribution and exhibition in Nigeria; I selected this set of case studies, which explored three Nigerian companies that facilitate Internet-based distribution, and digital exhibition of Nollywood content. I started chapter six with IROKO because the platform has been lauded as a pioneer in online circulation and exhibition of Nollywood content. Through various digital platforms created by IROKO, the African diaspora has been able to access Nigerian movies from their discrete locations. Choosing my next case study, Afrinolly, allowed me to explore how distribution through mobile devices is evolving and engaging audiences. The third case study, Filmhouse Cinema, was chosen in order to explore how digital cinema is changing the landscape of film distribution and exhibition in Nollywood. As a collection, these case studies focused on how
the process of distribution and exhibition of Nigerian cinema has experienced a fundamental shift in recent years.

3.1.2 Interviews

When conducting a research, interviewing is a key data collection technique used to access the views and interpretations of subjects under investigation. As Kvale (1996, p. 1) notes, “the researcher listens to what people themselves tell about their lived world, hears them express their views and opinions in their own words, learns about their views on their work situation and family life, their dreams and hopes”. In this research, a significant volume of primary data collected is drawn from interviews with professional stakeholders ‘elites’ in Nigeria’s film industry, such as directors, producers, media entrepreneurs, screenwriters, film exhibitors, government officials and other key figures involved in the Nigerian film industry. According to Marshall and Rossman (2010, p. 155), conducting interviews with ‘elite’ individuals is a special case of interviewing that focuses on a particular type of interview partner. These ‘elite’ individuals have a privileged status within society due to their superior knowledge, giving them a dominant role within that community. The choice of elite interviewing provided me with information that could not necessarily be obtained through official documents of the government or through the media, although, I was cautious of exaggerated or fictional accounts. In the process of conducting this research, the elite interviews were arranged in a semi-structured manner using open-ended questions. This approach encouraged respondents to speak more freely about the subject in depth and enabled the interview to probe into areas that I might not have considered in advance.

There are precedents for the use of elite interviews in studies about how industry practitioners actually perceive their own work and their position within that community. As Darbi and Hall observe, “the conduct of elite interviews has generally been subsumed under the general notion of conducting personal interviews, including with business and policy decision-makers” (2014, p. 832). This has meant that the research is potentially often being
conducted without an appreciation of the specific constraints that interviews with elites, e.g. key decision-makers, politicians and corporation heads, bring to the research process (Darbi & Hall 2014, pp. 832-833). For this research, there were enormous benefits in interviewing professional stakeholders in the industry. They provided important information about their backgrounds, goals and aspirations. Also, I had the opportunity of getting informed and learned insight about the research topic. A substantial amount of primary data was drawn from the semi-structured interviews conducted in 2015 and 2016. Overall, interviews were conducted with 21 Nollywood practitioners – film directors, producers, distributors, exhibitors, screenwriters, animators, entrepreneurs and government officials – though the interviews with the government officials were informal.

The research respondents were selected on the basis of their knowledge about the industry, and also their availability and willingness to participate in the research. The interview questions were based on the experiences of respondents; their approach to funding and distribution; their views on the current state of the Nigerian film industry; the challenges and prospects offered by new technologies. Furthermore, it is significant to acknowledge that many of the respondents in this research belong to a new generation of filmmakers in Nollywood that are predominantly based in Lagos, and as such represent a small sample of the overall Nollywood industry. Therefore, the specific findings in this research are not designed to speak on behalf of all practitioners in the Nigerian film industry. The research participants provided an insight into how practitioners in Nollywood are negotiating the challenges of screen content production and circulation in the current digital ecosystem in Nigeria. Some of the interviews were conducted by telephone, social media platforms like Facebook, Messenger and Skype, while others were conducted in-person, with follow-up correspondence to clarify and update information. Rather than referencing every source drawn upon for background information, the filmmakers, their positions and production company affiliations are listed current at the time of the interview. Only research respondents directly quoted are referenced. The participants listed in Table 2 made significant inputs to this study.
Table 2: List of research respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Films / Projects / Company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Chiadike</td>
<td>TV director</td>
<td><em>Tinsel</em> TV series (2012-present)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Lee</td>
<td>Film exhibitor</td>
<td>Ozone cinemas, Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chike Maduegbuna</td>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td>Founder, Afrinolly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Omope</td>
<td>Film distributor and producer</td>
<td>FilmOne distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remi Ogunpitan</td>
<td>Media entrepreneur</td>
<td>IBST media</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.2 Visual component: *Made in Nollywood*

The visual research method is a rapidly expanding field focused on the study of visual phenomena and the use of visual data (Bezemer 2016, p. 106). Much has been published on their design and use (see Pink 2001; van Leeuwen & Jewin 2000; Wiles et al. 2008). Complementing the written component of this research is the documentary *Made in Nollywood*. Visual research incorporates a vast array of different types of approaches and data: found data, researcher created data, the respondent created data and representations (Wiles et al. 2008, citing Prosser 2007; Prosser & Loxiety 2008). The visual component of this research is structured like a film essay. *Made in Nollywood* has no voice-over commentary, it is assembled from interviews with research participants, and careful selection of excerpts from recent new Nollywood films. The 35-minute documentary sought to know how industry practitioners interact with new technologies as they develop innovative ways to tell their stories and also invent viable and sustainable business models to circulate their creative work. The documentary serves as evidence to support my arguments in this thesis.

With the ubiquity of digital recording devices, visual data is now relatively cheap to create and collect by researchers. According to Weber (2008), images can play an integral role in the research process and be useful in a
number of ways: ‘production of artistic images as data’, ‘use of existing (found) artistic images as data or springboards for theorizing’, ‘use of visual and object-images to elicit or provoke other data’, ‘use of images as mode of interpretation and/or representation’, ‘use of images for feedback and documentation of research process’. (Pole 2004, p. 1). The ease and accessibility of digital production equipment appear to have opened a whole range of methodological opportunities for researchers (Dant 2004). As Pink (2004, p. 61) notes, “much of the information we communicate with is visual and includes references to the media culture that forms part of our everyday experience” (Pink 2004, p. 61). Thus, if we are to understand currently the ‘everyday experience’ of filmmakers in Nigeria, there is a need to have a visual representation of what is happening there.

*Made in Nollywood* was filmed mainly in Lagos, Nigeria. While most of the post-production work was done in Australia. Sourcing finance for the film project was an enormous challenge, most of the funding for the production came from personal saving and support from friends and family. This funding approach is quite similar to the traditional Nollywood model. However, I also received AUD$3500 in a grant from Griffith University. Obtaining ethical clearance to travel to Nigeria when making this documentary was another challenge I encountered. This development was due to a high level of insecurity in Nigeria at the time I was conducting this research. However, as a Nigerian citizen with extensive knowledge about the terrain, I was able to persuade the ethics committee to grant me clearance (see appendix 1). Another issue that assisted my ethical clearance was the fact that the research topic was not a sensitive issue that would have required authorisation from the Nigerian government. Most of the interactions I had with individuals working in the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC) and Nigerian Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) were all informal as they refused to be filmed.

When filming this documentary, I made a total of two visits to Nigeria. The first was in 2014 to make arrangements with intended participants while the second was in 2016, which involved the actual filming of the documentary.
The process of tracking down the respondents was very hectic; as most of the interviewees were in Lagos, where most of the filming happened. Lagos is a very energetic city with a population of over 18 million people. The traffic situation, perhaps like every other metropolitan city in the world, is very busy. I had a production team of five people including myself. All of the respondents were very welcoming, friendly and co-operative. Before conducting interviews with the research participants, I had to get their consent before filming (see appendix 2 for a sample of the signed consent form). Each interview began with a 5-minute recorded discussion about the respondent’s identity, and personal views and insights. The second half of each interview, which is about 30-minutes long, was the main part of the interview. The aim of this technique was to gain the trust of the interviewees so they could open up easily during the main interview; Also, they were informed that they could stop the interview at any point they felt uncomfortable. After the first few minutes of recording, I usually played it back to the respondent to show how I was recording them and how they looked on camera. The whole documentary was shot with a Canon Mark III DSLR camera. The postproduction of the documentary was done at Griffith University editing suite. I co-edited the documentary with Chris Mamouzelos and it took us about four weeks to complete the whole process. We made use of the footages from the interviews and b-rolls we shot in Nigeria, and also we included various excerpts from works produced by the filmmakers that were interviewed. The use of these carefully selected excerpts was aimed at providing a visual representation of the ‘new’ Nollywood cinema. It is worth noting that we were granted permission by the content producers to use the excerpts for the purpose of the documentary. Furthermore, due to technical issues around sound, Patrick Lee’s interview could not be in the documentary. See table 3, 4 and 5 below for names of the production crew, interviewees and films used in the documentary.
**Table 3: List of the production crew**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Production Crew</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ugo Ben Ebelebe</td>
<td>Interviewer/assistant cameraman/editor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel Adeyemi</td>
<td>Cameraman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afolabi Oyeleke</td>
<td>Sound/gaffer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uche Elias</td>
<td>Production manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisoye Adekoya</td>
<td>Transport</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4: List of the documentary participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewees</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Niyi Akinmolayan</td>
<td>Film director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tope Oshin</td>
<td>Film director, producer and casting director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seyi Babatope</td>
<td>Film director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Femi Odugbemi</td>
<td>Film director, screenwriter, cinematographer and producer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Taylaur</td>
<td>Film director and screenwriter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Chiadike</td>
<td>TV director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor Sanchez Aghahowa</td>
<td>TV director and producer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Lee</td>
<td>Film exhibitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chike Maduegbuna</td>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Omope</td>
<td>Film distributor and producer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remi Ogunpitan</td>
<td>Media entrepreneur</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5: List of movies used in the documentary: *Made in Nollywood*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movie/Year</th>
<th>Director</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>When Love Happens</em> (2014)</td>
<td>Seyi Babatope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Gidi Blues</em> (2016)</td>
<td>Femi Odugbemi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Falling</em> (2015)</td>
<td>Niyi Akinmolayan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ireti</em> (2016)</td>
<td>Tope Oshin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ojuju</em> (2014)</td>
<td>Cj ‘Fiery’ Obasi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Love &amp; War</em> (2013)</td>
<td>Tope Oshin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>When Love Happens Again</em> (2016)</td>
<td>Seyi Babatope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Slow Country</em> (2016)</td>
<td>Eric Aghemien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Married to the Game</em> (2013)</td>
<td>Walter Taylaur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Mirror Boy</em> (2011)</td>
<td>Obi Emelonye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Dinner</em> (2016)</td>
<td>Franklyn Jituboh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Last Flight to Abuja</em> (2012)</td>
<td>Obi Emelonye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Sim</em> (2014)</td>
<td>Anthil Studios</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 Chapter summary

To a large extent, the Nigerian film industry over the years has remained informal in its operations. According to Nnamdi Madichie (2010), “despite what has been described and reported as the emergence of a new force in
low budget movies raking in multimillion US dollars, Nollywood’s informal, intuitive and opportunistic marketing has contributed to the poor product and production quality” (Madichie 2010, p. 626). The informality and unstructured nature of the industry made the task of conducting this study very challenging. There were no readily available official data and statistics. There were also no well-defined credible sources where vital information about the industry could be accessed. Most of the government agencies such as the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC), Ministry of Culture and Information and so forth, saddled with the responsibility of regulating and overseeing the industry, virtually have no records or statistics about the industry. Accessing some of the government agencies on the Internet was a difficult task. For example, the Nigerian Film and Video Censor Board (NFVCB), which is the regulatory body set up to regulate the films and video industry in Nigeria, does not have a functioning website at the time of writing this thesis. Another issue is government bureaucracy in accessing information; their attitude towards researchers is very hostile. In this research, I had to rely on statistics and data from international agencies like World Bank, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) and so forth.

Advances in technology were also a key factor in this research. The rate at which digital devices or innovative models become outdated made it hard for the research to keep pace with the change. As Nime (2012) observes,

> New media embody change, meaning that there is always something ‘new’ to discover in this rapidly evolving field. Consequently, contemporary analysis becomes quickly outdated, typically offering an understanding of how things used to be, and what limitations used to exist, not long ago. (Nime 2012, p. 50)

I had to apply Nime’s approach, which was to establish a strong historical foundation and refrain from speculation in order to preserve the value of my research and its potential significance as published work (Nime 2012, p. 51). This chapter has considered the methodological approaches for this thesis,
which employed elite interviews, case studies, and visual research methods. It has discussed the rationale behind the variety of approaches used for this study and reviewed the research design. The following chapter will explore significant changes occurring in the film industry and how these changes are providing prospects and also problems for new generation filmmakers in Nigeria.
Chapter 4: In the age of digital disruption

In the film industry, the subject of digital revolution in cinema became prominent in the 1990s, with notable “public figures like George Lucas and Roger Ebert respectively championing and declaiming the new technologies that were emerging” (Rombes 2009, p. 3). In the last three decades, the transition from analogue to digital technology has been extensively discussed by numerous film scholars, such as McKeman (2005), Rodowick (2007), Ohanian & Phillips (2000), and so forth. As Peter Kaufman and Jen Mohan concluded in their report prepared for the Tribeca Film Institute in 2008, “the advent of digital technologies and the skyrocketing demand for online video are going to change the nature of independent film and video production, distribution, and funding forever” (Kaufman & Mohan 2008, p. 17). Presently, it is evident that innovative cinematic trends stimulated by advances in digital technology are still emerging, and the industry is still evolving. This chapter explores significant transformations occurring in the film industry which is stimulated by innovations in digital media and cinematic technologies. The overview provides a baseline for further discussion in later chapters, namely the impact of these ‘transformations’ on the aesthetics, style, narrative, content, and circulation of Nigerian cinema. Also, with the influx of digital tools in screen production and circulation, this chapter will examine how major film companies, established and emerging filmmakers are inventing innovative techniques and models in order to remain relevant in a changed business environment. I argue in this chapter, that with the digitalisation of the filmmaking and distribution process, a culture of innovative approaches to screen production is emerging in Nollywood driven by new generation tech-savvy filmmakers.

Cinema as a medium has been strategic in advancing various intents and purposes. In the African continent, the medium has been used not only to entertain but also to “instruct, subjugate, persuade and propagate” various
“social, political, economic and educational” ideas (Akashoro 2011, p. 86). Since the introduction of cinema to Nigeria, the industry has always been defined by technological innovation (see chapter 1). Industry practitioners have always devised new techniques and methods to make the ‘cinematic event’ more appealing, interesting, marketable, and exciting. Currently, there are innovative digital cinematic trends broadly available and fashioning the film industry (see chapter 5). These innovations are now occurring in what is commonly termed as ‘digital disruption’ (Iordanova & Cunningham 2012). In the Nigerian film industry, the traditional models associated with the industry have been changing dramatically in the last two decades due to the increasing ubiquity of digital technology. Nollywood is experiencing a major transitional phase in its existence, one that is more profound and possibly far-reaching than any other that has gone before. The once dominant flow of movie screen culture historically centred around films shot on video and distributed on VHS cassettes, VCD and DVD for home viewing through informal sector marketing systems has been dispersed with the diversity of cinematic commodities such as Internet-enabled distribution and digital exhibition.

4.1 Transition from Analog to Digital filmmaking

For over a century, the technology used in the global film industry was exclusively analog (celluloid and video). The use of celluloid technology in the filmmaking process in Nigeria remained relatively unchanged till the mid-1980s when experimentation with video technology commenced. However, it was not until the early 90s that video format became viable for commercial use. The introduction of video-films by Nollywood practitioners indeed revolutionised African filmmaking (see Haynes 2000; Obiaya 2011). As discussed in chapter 1, filmmaking and film distribution on celluloid had been extremely difficult or impossible in sub-Saharan Africa, but Nollywood showed – from 1992 onwards – that an industry could be built around films shot on video and circulated via VHS cassettes. Analog video technology was cheap and easy to operate, permitting filmmaking by anyone with a camcorder and two video cassette recorders (VCRs) for editing. An explosion of grassroots
popular culture ensued, mediated by informal sector distributors who were not much different from their audience culturally. Digital technologies began to appear around the early 2000s, most visibly were video compact discs (VCDs) that replaced VHS cassettes. As digital technologies made in-roads in the art and craft of making Nollywood movies, the role of analog video technologies continued to diminish. The processes were no longer defined by the limitations associated with analog technologies such as distortion or degradation of analog signals when they are processed or reproduced. The idea of ‘digital filmmaking’ is based on an “approach that combines certain traditional filmmaking techniques with new capabilities that have come about through the integration of computers, digital image manipulation, disk recording, and networking” (Ohanian & Phillips 2000, p. 3). While analog signals, “on the other hand, contains a vast range of incremental electrical or photochemical values that are analogous to the sound and image spectrum” (Kindem & Musburger 2001, p. 4)

The handling of celluloid film cameras is cumbersome, they were usually heavy and require lots of light when in use. Although digital recording formats eliminated some of these obstacles, mainstream production companies did not immediately embrace the technology. The major Hollywood “studios have long had a strict requirement with regard to image quality and thus a conservative approach to new technologies” (Mateer 2014, p. 5). The television industry and ‘indie’ filmmakers, however, welcomed the technology because of the democratic qualities attached to the medium. Historically, the advances in digital recording formats gathered momentum in 1987, when Sony in its efforts to digitise the videotape technology developed the world’s first component digital video tape recorder (VTR), the SONY D-1. With the success of the project, Sony entered into a joint venture partnership with Panavision in order to explore ways of developing high-definition digital cameras. The partnership led to the introduction of the Sony HDW-F900 24p Cine Alta HDCAM high definition video camera, based on charge-coupled device (CCD) technology. This signalled a new phase in the digital revolution; for the first time, “a digital camera could offer resolution approaching 16mm film stocks, with improved latitude and colour fidelity” (Mateer 2014, p. 5). The
commercial introduction of the HDCAM in 2003 represented a significant phase in digital recording. Today, screen content shot on digital recording format is hardly distinguishable from a content shot on 35 mm or 70 mm celluloid film. The other landmark in the transition from analog to digital technology is the area of post-production. The term ‘post-production’ is not only limited to editing – piecing together different shots to tell the story – but also to all other ‘activities’ carried out on the movie prior to it being distributed and exhibited (McKernan 2005). Some of these ‘activities’ include editing the image, creating sound effects, editing the soundtrack, sound design, adding visual special effects (computer generated imagery [CGI]), and finally colour-grading (correction). In the early days of analog filmmaking, the post-production process was strenuous, time consuming, complex and highly specialized. The need to develop sophisticated systems that could make the process fast and efficient led to the development of digital nonlinear editing systems such as Lightworks, ImMix, Avid, Final Cut Pro, and Adobe Creative Suite. As Kindem and Musburger (2001) point out, digital editing software offers several advantages over conventional means of editing film, audiotape, and videotape, including increased flexibility, as well as potential time and cost savings (Kindem & Musburger 2001, p. 7).

At the evolving stage of digital cinematic technologies, the cost of procurement was considerably high and the systems were difficult to maintain. But the technology did provide the innovative and creative opportunities for filmmakers to shoot, edit, and animate footage in ways that were once unimaginable and prohibitively expensive. Today the cost of procuring these systems is relatively very low and the technology has improved immensely, making it even more attractive to filmmaking industries like Nollywood. As Tope Oshin observes, in the past when filmmaking was about making films on celluloid, we had very few filmmakers and we had the difficulty of not being able to project our films in the cinemas. It was one of the biggest problems the Nigerian film industry had at that time. However, the digital revolution has helped us get to that point where we can catch up with the world, we can use the new digital cameras, we can avail ourselves of the new technology, our editing work flow is better and we can work on sound better (2016, pers.)
comm. 29 September). The transformation in the production process has brought about profound changes in the ways storytellers create their screen content – 3D technology, DSLR cameras, cellphone cinema and so forth – and also how audiences consume such content (streaming and downloading on mobile devices). Today’s digital cinematic technologies have expanded the powerful medium of storytelling, making the medium accessible and affordable. The transition to digital technologies in screen production has brought about efficiency, speed and flexibility in other areas of filmmaking such as pre-production writing, storyboarding, production recording and lighting, scheduling and budgeting, costume design and producing. Digital tools have significantly increased production efficiency in animation and special visual effects, and advances in CGI have “begun to alter conventional notions of reality and history through the proliferation of imaginative and realistic special effects” (Kindem & Musburger 2001, p. 4). Creative ideas that would not have been possible with analog technology, are now attainable with outstanding computer generated imagery (CGI), in movies like Avatar (2009), Lord of the Rings (2001), Harry Potter (2009) and Toy Story (2009), amongst others.

4.2 Digital screening of movies

The transition to digital technologies also represents a significant period of change in the distribution and exhibition of movies. Globally, advances in high definition low-cost digital video cameras and post-production equipment, coupled with the introduction of digital cinema and Internet-based distribution, are lowering barriers and creating possibilities for emerging and independent filmmakers to bypass traditional distribution and exhibition methods (Ryan & Hearn 2010). In the Nigerian film industry, digital screening of screen content is radically rewriting the rules of the film business, altering not only the established straight-to-video (STV) release pattern associated with the industry but also expanding revenue prospects for filmmakers. The current trend appears to encourage filmmakers to actually invest more in technology to improve the quality of films as an increasing number of film audiences go to the cinemas to watch Nollywood films. The term ‘digital cinema’ is often
associated with the notion of ‘convergence’ and “the process of mastering a motion picture in digital form, distributing the digital file to cinemas (on fixed media, by satellite, or over broadband connection) and displaying the motion picture using a digital projector” (Culkin & Randle 2003, p. 81). Movie theatres around the world have been embracing digital projectors in their operation. This trend is based upon the broader digital infrastructure, the adoption of digital projection by the cinema operators, and the provision of digital content (Crofts 2011, p. 1). Digital cinema, however, is more than a replacement for film print projection; the system has established a completely new platform for creative interventions. For example, the innovative venture of recent 3D movies could not have been possible without digital technology.

The idea of digital cinema became noticeable in the late 1990s with the historic digital screening of George Lucas’s *Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace* (1999). During the exhibition, only four movie theatres in the United States had digital facilities to screen commercially (McKernan 2005). The screening attracted the attention of many industry stakeholders to the emerging potential of digital tools in theatrical exhibition, but fears of piracy and cost of transition to digital projectors made industry stakeholders reluctant to welcome the technology. After a series of digital screenings in the late 1990s, progress in digital cinema stalled. As Crofts (2011) points out, “The adoption of digital cinema only really started to gather steam in 2005 when the DCI specification was agreed and concerns about interoperability and piracy were addressed” (Crofts 2011, p. 2). The success of James Cameron’s 3D movie *Avatar* in 2009, which was nominated for nine Academy Awards and grossed about US$2.7 billion at the box-office, contributed immensely to the development of digital cinema. Currently, the global film industry has embraced digital technology as its preferred mode for theatrical exhibition. From just four commercial digital screens in 1999 in the United States, there are now over 40,000 digital screens in both the US and Canada. The total of digital screens and digital 3D screens globally are over 141,000 and 74,000 respectively (MPAA Theatrical Market Statistics 2015).
The paradigm shift in the theatrical exhibition is associated with some inherent benefits digital cinema has offered the film industry. Some of these great benefits are supposedly “image clarity and quality, lower cost, greater security and more flexibility and efficiency” (Swartz 2004, p. 1). As Niyi Akinmolayan acknowledges,

In the early days, when we had just a few movie theatres such as Silverbird Cinemas and so forth, most of the films were projected using film prints. It really discouraged a lot of filmmakers due to cost, some of the Nigerian films shown in those days were screened via a computer and the images looked terrible on screen but now, with digital projection, the films look really good. (2016, pers. comm. 4 October)

In conventional cinema, the ‘cinematic experience’ can be diminished due to the ‘wear and tear’ associated with the mechanical process of projecting film prints. But digital cinema, which is essentially “streaming data from the cinema server ensures that the motion picture clarity and quality are maintained; colours don’t fade, images don’t jitter, and the audio is delivered in uncompressed multitrack perfection” (McKernan 2005, p. 184). Digital recordings are permanent and are much less likely to experience loss in quality when used to preserve creative content or when more versions are made from a high-quality ‘digital master’ (Swartz 2004, p. 3). The process involved when producing and distributing film prints for theatrical exhibition could be quite strenuous, complex, and costly. As Culkin and Randle (2003, p. 81) notes, “the cost and time involved in this process are significant”. When a movie is shot and edited using digital technology, the ‘digital master’ can be fed directly to the cinema server as a digital file. No special cost is needed to make extra copies for distribution to various movie theatres as compared to celluloid technology. The two available options when distributing ‘digital prints’ are either streaming via a dedicated broadband or satellite link or through a specialised hard disk meant for digital cinema servers. The cost involved is minimal and the process is less cumbersome when compared to film prints release. The use of digital cinema package (DCP) in theatrical exhibition offers greater security for both the filmmaker and the exhibitor. Once the
digital file is encoded and transmitted directly to the movie theatre, the opportunity to make unauthorized copies of the ‘original master’ is eradicated. Security encryptions can be made on the digital file to make piracy far more difficult (McKernan 2005, p. 184). Digital cinema also encourages flexibility and efficiency for both distributors and exhibitors. The ‘digital print’ can contain multiple subtitled and dubbed language versions, permitting a single theatre to meet the varied language needs of its audience on different screens (Swartz 2005, p. 4). This is highly significant in the case-study on Nollywood.

4.3 Crowdfunding: A new approach to film finance

The concept of crowdfunding has been receiving much scholarly attention in the past few years, and much of this interest arises from the rich and powerful potentials of Internet-based funding platforms (see Gubbins 2012; Dresner 2014). For many established and emerging filmmakers, access to finance is one of the most challenging aspects of screen production. Traditionally, a number of funding options existed for screen content creators such as government grants, private investment, debt finance etc. But constraints in obtaining funding from some of these sources has prompted content creators to look for alternative ways to secure funds for their productions. The idea of ‘crowdfunding’, where individuals, through online funding platforms such as Kickstarter and Indiegogo, are encouraged to fund creative and innovative projects, is attracting a number of film projects. Crowdfunding platforms (CFPs) facilitate the financing process by providing an opportunity for individuals who are passionate about a creative idea to make financial contributions and to help promote the project within their social media network. Through crowdfunding, screen content creators can independently produce, promote, and circulate their creative work. The medium does not only create “a direct economic relationship between producer and audience, it can also – with the right amount of commitment and work – establish a niche audience (comprising of crowdfunding supporters) and even leverage another campaign off the back of a successful first” (Laycock 2016, p. 113)
In some countries such as the US, UK, and Australia, the crowdfunding model has achieved some relative success in sourcing funds for film projects. Quite a number of independent movies have been successfully funded through CFPs such as *Age of Stupid* (2009), *The Tunnel* (2011), *Veronica Mars* (2013), *Wish I was Here* (2014), *Gosnell* (2014), and *Laser Team* (2015). Crowdfunding, however, is still a relatively new phenomenon in Nollywood. Nigerian filmmakers are still experimenting with the idea of sourcing finance for film projects through online funding platforms. For example, one of Nigeria’s most respected directors Tunde Kelani attempted to crowdfund his film *Dazzling Mirage* in 2013. The campaign which was launch on Indiegogo to raise US$20,000 was unsuccessful, it only managed to raise $2,646 from 21 backers. Despite this development, Nigerian producers are still exploring the possibilities offered by crowdfunding. As Femi Odugbemi acknowledges, “the task of a producer to figure out interesting and creative ways to finance a project is now being empowered through digital technology and by the power of the Internet” (2016, pers. Comm. September). There are different sets of challenges faced by Nigerian content producers in utilising the medium. Some of the obstacles include inadequate regulation and legal complications concerning the privileges and status of financiers, the absence of required fundraising skills, and extremely expensive data plans for internet connection. Currently, there is a gradual influx of Nigerian owned crowdfunding platforms such as Naturfund, Donate-ng, and Imeela. However, most of these online platforms are mostly dedicated to charity related work rather than film projects.

The idea of crowdfunding is not exclusive to the film industry. CFPs are being used globally for diverse purposes such as raising funds for charity-work, activism, political campaigns, business startups and so forth. The CFP model could be classified into four main categories: equity-based, lending-based, reward-based, and donation-based. According to a 2012 industry report from the Netherlands, equity-based and lending-based crowdfunding are quite common with digital goods, for example, software, film and music. While donation-based and reward-based are mainly for cause-based campaigns that appeal to funders’ personal beliefs and passions (Massolution 2012). As
Crowdfunding campaigns are usually conducted through a dedicated online funding platform, the ‘modus operandi’ of each CFP differs from the other. For instance, Kickstarter, which is quite popular amongst filmmakers, does not permit projects to raise money for charity. If the ‘creator’ fails to reach the fundraising goal, the pledge is void and donations will be returned to the supporters (Kickstarter 2014). But CFPs like Gofundme allow ‘creators’ to campaign for charity purposes and they pay out the collected amount even if the fundraising goal is not attained. As entrepreneurship researchers outline, once a campaign is active, the creator is expected to be active on the CFP and also on their social media in order to encourage backers or supporters to financially contribute towards the project and to promote it as well (Meyskens & Bird 2015). Digital social networking platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and so forth, are essential to a successful crowdfunding campaign. In crowdfunding campaigns, some of the financiers or backers can already exist as an online community, or sometimes they originate from different networks that share an interest in financing a certain creative project (Dresner 2014). In 2014, CFPs raised $16.2 billion, a 167% increase from $6.1 billion in 2013. The industry was forecast to double once again and reached $34.4 billion in 2015 (Massolution 2012). Furthermore, the emergence of online payment platforms like PayPal, WePay, and Google Wallet has exceedingly facilitated crowdfunding campaigns due to the ease of conducting financial transactions.

4.4 The emergence of Internet-based distribution platforms

In the film industry, with diverse categories of digital delivery platforms offering screen content creators access to large audiences willing to ‘pay’ for creative content, the current distribution landscape offers prospects for emerging and established filmmakers. In the last decade, Internet-based distribution of film and related screen content is an emergent element in the dynamically changing landscape of screen culture (Cunningham & Silver 2012). Mainstream distribution companies now face stiff rivalry from an array of major online players such as Apple’s iTunes, Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, and YouTube, among others. In the early stages of Internet-based distribution,
mainstream distribution companies were slow to key into the potentials of the medium, unlike the music or publishing industry. The first set of online movie distribution companies such as IFilm, Atom, Intertainer, Sightsound and CinemaNow, among others, was underfunded and did not make much impact. At this stage, the major film companies wanted to control the online marketplace. Thus, they formed a joint venture partnership establishing two VOD sites in 2001 (Movielink and Moviebeam). However, their efforts met with little or no success. Currently, the most innovative and successful players in the online marketplace include Amazon, Apple, Netflix, and Hulu, all of whom exist somewhere between the dream factories of Hollywood and the high-tech entrepreneurialism of Silicon Valley (Curtin et al. 2014). In Nollywood, current trends suggest that these innovative approaches to screen content distribution are gradually establishing themselves alongside the traditional Nollywood system. The emergence of Nigerian owned Internet-based distribution platforms such as IROKO, Ibaka TV, TV Nolly, Nollyland, Afrinolly, and so forth, seem to have ushered in a new phase in the circulation of Nigerian screen content both local and international.

Apart from the online distribution platforms highlighted above, there are other Internet-driven developments that have offered new forms of content acquisition. These innovations have direct consequences on screen content distribution and exhibition. With the development of social networks stimulated by the changes to the way web pages are designed and used – a phase of web development commonly referred to as Web 2.0 – digital delivery platforms such as YouTube (2005), Instagram (2010), Facebook (2004), and Twitter (2006), have empowered screen content consumers in a dynamic way to became active audiences. This trend has not only expanded access to content but it has also advanced the participatory culture of audiences, allowing them to interact, share, and comment on contents. Other evolving aspects in online distribution and exhibition are around the mobile device market. Consumer adoption of mobile devices is growing at an exponential rate. For example, the number of people using smartphones worldwide was expected to exceed 2.16 billion in 2016 (Kissonergis 2015). This means that more than one-quarter of the world’s population would have access to screen
content on their mobile devices. This development, coupled with increasing broadband speed and penetration in most parts of the world, suggests a strong market for streaming and downloading of screen content (Gubbins 2012). Currently, in Nigeria, the use of mobile technology in circulating screen content has become prominent in a changing digital environment. Nollywood producers are leveraging on mobile technologies to create innovative platforms to distribute their creative content. Mobile digital platforms such as Afrinolly is creating opportunities for content producers to distribute their creative work. The case study of Afrinolly is examined in chapter 6 of this thesis.

As screen content circulation and consumption continue to transform in an age that is driven by technological innovations, change in market dynamics and audience behaviour is purging traditional business models. It is evident that the trend is creating new prospects as well as challenges. While Internet-based distribution has allowed film audiences to have easier access to screen content, it has also triggered the fragmentation of these audiences across multiple platforms. In the global film industry, the dominant position of the Hollywood ‘majors’ in the distribution chain could be undermined by the prospects of screen content creators ‘selling directly’ to individual consumers or niche or mass audiences via online delivery platforms (Cunningham & Silver 2013). The major Hollywood studios of the past depended largely on the vertical integration model to maintain their market-dominant position in film distribution (Silver & Alpert 2003). The ‘majors’ relied on a sequential release pattern to fully exploit the commercial value of the content they control. The model allowed for maximization of revenues. As Iordanova (2012) notes, previously, it sometimes takes up to 24 months after a film’s original theatrical release before other ‘auxiliary’ distribution modes – pay-per-view (PPV), DVD/video release, broadcasting on terrestrial television networks – could be completed. Advances in Internet-based distribution are making the vertical integration model obsolete. As the popularity of many digital delivery platforms such as Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, iTunes, and YouTube etc., continue to rise, a number of independent films are being released across various platforms simultaneously. Most independent movies are produced with low budgets
when compared to mainstream Hollywood movies. Independent filmmakers are often without the structure and big financial backing associated with the Hollywood majors. With digitalisation of the filmmaking process and the use of Internet-driven delivery platforms, independent filmmakers are able to by-pass the big film corporations. This development enables creators to influence the direction of content creation and circulation, therefore generating opportunities for audiences to see movies that would not have been possible with the ‘gatekeepers’ in place (alternative content). The generational change in audience experience is also a factor in these changes in delivery platforms.

4.5 Festivals exhibition

Film festivals originated in Europe as showcases for national cinemas and developed into the influential film festival circuit of today (de Valck 2007, p. 87). Currently, festivals like Cannes, Toronto and Sundance attract widespread global attention as glittering showcases for films and people. These major film festivals create a vibrant node for global film industries, allowing “multiple agents negotiate local, national, and supranational relations of culture, power, and identity” (Wong 2011, p. 1). With the current transformations occurring in the film industry, film festivals seem to exist as an alternative distribution network. These networks provide audiences with opportunities to enjoy films and refine tastes in areas such as world cinema, experimental films or archival treasures (de Valck 2012). In the emergent Nigerian film industry, local festivals such as Zuma Film Festival (ZIFF), Abuja International Film Festival (AIFF), Africa International Film Festival (AFRIFF), and iREPRESENT International Documentary Film Festival (iREP), play a significant role in shaping the festival landscape in Nigeria. According to Femi Odugbemi, co-founder and executive director of iREP, “film festivals are essential to development, they are important to an industry like Nollywood because they provide exposure for our films” (2016, pers. Comm. September).

In the past, the film festivals were characterised by complicated logistical limitations ordained by distance and time; location and calendar position were
of primary importance (Iordnaova 2012). However, advances in digital technology have offered film festivals benefits in the area of organisation and logistics. For example, all entries for the Africa International Film Festival (AFRIFF), are submitted online. This means that any filmmaker with access to an Internet connection in any part of the world has the opportunity to participate in the festival. The cost and time saved in this process are significant. Digitalisation of the process not only yields great benefits in terms of logistical limitations, it has also assisted in the clarity and quality of the image seen by festival guests. The process also offers great security for the filmmaker and more flexibility for the festival organisers. Movies submitted via digital format can be copied many times and could also contain multiple subtitled and dubbed language versions, which give festival organisers the ability to screen the content to a wider audience. This ensures efficiency and saves time and money. Film festivals have demonstrated that they are viable in the digital era, as increasingly festival organisers are modifying their operations to become relevant in the age of digital disruption. Programmes of many film festivals are now streamed online. For example, in 2010 Tribeca began streaming festival films, and the following year they launched the Tribeca Online Film Festival, which added live streaming of selected events, as well as videos online from other events, such as panel discussions, which were posted day by day. The oldest film festival Venice, in 2012 took a pioneering step into cyber-space, as the festival had to put part of its official selection online. Fifteen features in its Horizons section were streamed to the public (Barraclough 2012). In Nigeria, the iREP Film Festival in 2015, exploited the benefits of online connectivity and offered audiences dynamic access to the festival events through live stream broadcast. The interactive forum created an opportunity for audience participation.

Whilst the global film industry is becoming increasingly comfortable with the terms ‘digital film’, ‘digital distribution’ and ‘digital exhibition’, the major film festivals appear to share in these fundamental transformations. At the 41st Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) in 2016, eight Nollywood films were showcased as part of the festival’s Lagos-themed ‘City to City’ spotlight. The screening of the selected Nollywood films reflected the new wave of cinema
coming out of Nigeria. Listed in Table 6 are the Nollywood films screened at TIFF. Also, as the global festival landscape becomes increasingly competitive, some of these major festivals with big markets are becoming key players in film promotion and distribution. The potential for festivals to become distributors in their own right has been on the agenda now for a couple of years, with some practical experiments from festivals such as Sundance, Tribeca and the International Film Festival Rotterdam (Gubbins 2012). At TIFF, for example, Internet-based distribution companies like Netflix were able to offer distribution deals to some Nigerian filmmakers that made it to the ‘City to City’ spotlight. As Niyi Akinmolayan observes, “we got really good deals for the films that came, including The Arbitration (2016)” (2016, pers. comm. 4 October). Nollywood Week Paris is another international film festival organised to showcase Nigerian cinema to an international mainstream film audience. The festival was created in order to generate a global discussion about Nollywood. Started in 2013 and headed by Serge Noukoué and Nadira Shakur, Nollywood Week is now in its fourth year. A total of fifteen Nollywood films were exhibited in 2016. Listed in Table 6 and 7 are the Nigerian films that were screened both TIFF 2016 and Nollywood Week Paris 2016.

**Table 6: List of Nollywood films screened at the Toronto International Film Festival 2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Films / Year</th>
<th>Film Directors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>93 Days</em> (2016)</td>
<td>Steve Gukas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Arbitration</em> (2016)</td>
<td>Niyi Akinmolayan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Okafor’s Law</em> (2016)</td>
<td>Omoni Oboli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>76</em> (2016)</td>
<td>Izu Ojukwu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Green White</em> (2016)</td>
<td>Abba Makama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Just Not Married</em> (2016)</td>
<td>Uduak-Obong Patrick</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7: List of Nollywood films screened at the Nollywood Week Paris 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Films / Year</th>
<th>Film Director</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The CEO</em> (2016)</td>
<td>Kunle Afolayan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Good Son</em> (2014)</td>
<td>Tomisin Adepeju</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Encounter</em> (2015)</td>
<td>Tolu Ajayi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Prey</em> (2015)</td>
<td>Sunny King</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ireti</em> (2015)</td>
<td>Tope Oshin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Fifty</em> (2015)</td>
<td>Biyi Bandele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Falling</em> (2015)</td>
<td>Niyi Akinmolayan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Stalker</em> (2016)</td>
<td>Moses Inwang</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has explored the advances in digital technologies and how they are transforming the film industry. As Rodowick (2007) observes, “in the course of a decade, the long privilege of the analog image and the technology of image production has been almost completely replaced by digital simulations and digital process” (Rodowick 2007, p. 8). At different stages in the filmmaking practice, digital cinematic tools have offered film industry
practitioners the opportunity to operate as a networked community, encouraging an environment that is characterised by improved technology, efficiency and easier logistics. These democratic qualities are evident at all levels in filmmaking, for example, funding. When it comes to financing creative projects, the Internet is providing alternative means to raising funds through crowdfunding or crowdsourcing. Though at this stage, there is no overwhelming evidence to conclude that crowdfunding can become a single viable and sustainable model for raising finance for big budget movies, there are indications that the medium still remains a viable option for independent filmmakers that are interested in activist cinema (Gubbins 2012). In the Nigerian film industry, we can see that these models could offer an alternative to the many funding challenges associated with the industry, as seen in chapter five of this thesis, where we analyse some case studies. In the production and post-production stages, digital tools have provided aspiring and established filmmakers the opportunities to express their creative aspirations. The barriers that existed before now have been bypassed. There are fundamental reductions in production equipment cost, specialised skill set for practitioners, personal cost, and logistics, among others. In distribution and exhibition, Nollywood seems to be closing the wide gap between Nigeria and other mainstream film industries in the world. Screen content creators in Nigeria are using Internet-based platforms to access and engage audiences, inventing innovative ways to remain competitive in a world of digital connectivity. With the introduction of digital projection, Nollywood films are now being screened in regional and international cinemas. At the moment, there are obvious improvements to the quality of films coming out of Nollywood. As Tope Oshin points out, “we are now making better films, films that meet international standards, we now pay more attention to sound, picture, to performances and a whole lot of other things” (2016, pers. comm. 29 September). This comprehensive overview of current trends in the wider industry provides a baseline comparison for the Nigerian film industry. The following chapter will analyse case studies that are conditioning the changes in Nollywood.
Chapter 5: Reinventing Nollywood

New technologies allow new voices, new voices create new points of view, new points of view give us new market segments, new market segments expand the market, the market expands, we all eat.

Victor Sanchez Aghahowa (2016)

The previous chapter outlined broad emerging trends impacting on the film industry. This chapter, however, will analyse key aspects of digital storytelling in Nollywood, by examining specific case studies driven by the characteristics, processes and strategies of ‘new generation’ filmmakers in Nigeria. The Nigerian film industry has always been faced with criticism around its modes of production, quality, and professionalism (Alamu 2010, p. 163). This chapter argues that digital technology is expanding the art and craft of filmmaking in Nollywood, thus creating opportunities for Nigerian storytellers to invent innovative models to tell their stories and be competitive in the global marketplace. These models that rely upon digital tools and innovation have enabled the ‘new wave’ in Nigerian cinema to stand out from the long-established production models associated with the industry, which, although still in existence, have become largely obsolete. As Femi Odugbemi suggests, there is an understanding now that the qualities of the films out of Nollywood need to get better, and there are filmmakers that are beginning to force a certain upward mobility to quality and so the Nollywood we used to know before, is not the Nollywood now (2016, pers. comm. September).

Nigerian cinema in the last decade has undergone a period of transformation as the introduction of reasonably priced high-end digital tools in the filmmaking process has created a paradigm shift in its production modes. As Connor Ryan observes, “recent experimentation by Nollywood producers has encouraged increasing differentiation of film practices as a strategy for
contending with a demanding video market” (Ryan 2015, p. 55). At present, the quality of Nollywood films being screened in local, regional and international cinemas reveal a significant transition from the traditional low budget video production associated with the industry. This new wave of cinema coming out of Nigeria, created by well-trained professional Nollywood producers and directors is what has now been widely referred to as ‘New Nollywood’. It is worth noting that the ‘New Nollywood’ filmmakers consist of industry practitioners that have undergone training in film schools located in Nigeria and overseas. Many of these practitioners have gathered some level of experience and knowledge about filmmaking from other regions and territories. The budget of these professionally made films produced with high-end digital production gear cost far more when compared to the average Nollywood video-films which ranges from US$10,000 – US$40,000 and their distribution scheme is different from the traditional Nollywood system. As Ryan (2015, p. 55) suggests, these “aesthetically sophisticated films intended for a new, tiered distribution method, beginning with the theatrical release and ending with DVD release”. For more discussion about the new, tiered distribution method, see Made in Nollywood (min. 15:28 – 16:20).

5.1 Creating the ‘new’ Nollywood cinema

Despite some of the challenges associated with working in the Nigerian film industry (see Made in Nollywood min. 02:03 – 03:06), digital cinematic devices are creating unparalleled opportunities for Nigerian filmmakers to visualise their ideas in a manner that would have been previously considered impossible, or simply too expensive. As Victor Aghahowa suggests, there is a certain level of resource and speed in production that is necessary to work in this market which just can’t happen with a celluloid but (can with) digital technology (2016, pers. comm. 27 September). In the past, the use of analog technology – celluloid and video – in the filmmaking process created a number of restrictions as discussed in chapter four. The benefits of the transition from analog to digital technologies in Nollywood are evident, as filmmakers now do not necessarily suffer from any of those restrictions or limitations associated with the analog format. Gradually we are beginning to
see stories with themes that are technologically driven. The use of computer generated imagery (CGI) and visual effects is currently pushing the creative boundaries of some Nigerian storytellers. As Obi Emelonye acknowledges, “the changes in technology has directly affected the things we do as filmmakers and Nollywood cannot be removed from this global change” (2016, pers. comm. 5 June). Nigerian filmmakers are also employing advanced production gear like cranes, drones and handheld camera stabilising systems to achieve creative shots. At the level of post-production we are beginning to see a lot of Nollywood films that have some interesting and artistic colour grading choices and visual effects (see Made in Nollywood min. 13.03 – 13:31).

Obi Emelonye’s disaster thriller Last Flight to Abuja (2012), inspired by true events represents the section of Nollywood that is trying to restructure the industry’s approach to filmmaking. Emelonye, a producer and director is one of the notable new generation filmmakers that is pushing for quality and higher production values in Nollywood. Trained in the United Kingdom as a lawyer, Emelonye left his legal practice to focus on filmmaking. He established his production company The Nollywood Factory and released his first film Echoes of War in 2004. Emelonye has since produced various award winning and internationally recognised films such as The Mirror Boy (2011), Onye Ozi (2013), Thy Will Be Done (2015), and Oxford Gardens (2016). The film Last Flight to Abuja shot on an ARRI digital cinema, was made with ₦40,000,000 (US$160,000), the budget which might be classified low by Hollywood standards is quite high in Nollywood. The airplane disaster thriller which was based on a series of fatal air crashes in Nigeria around the mid-2000s starred famous names from both Nollywood and Hollywood such as Omotola Jalade-Ekiende, Hakeem Kae-Kazim, Jim Iyke and Jide Kosoko. The 81-minute long movie was an aesthetic leap from the slapdash and guerrilla filmmaking style related with the typical melodrama Nollywood video-films that are hastily shot and distributed via VCDs and DVDs. The film incorporated a lot of CGIs and visual effects and pushed the boundaries with Nollywood.
The movie *Last Flight to Abuja* introduced a new genre in Nollywood with its technologically driven theme. Although the technical level of the CGIs and visuals effects used in the movie attracted mixed reactions from film critics and audiences, it was still commercially successful grossing over ₦55,000,000 (US$220,000) at the box office, with cinema screenings in Nigeria and the UK. From inception, Nollywood has always been a melodrama-based film industry and rarely told stories that were technological driven, however, the new generation of filmmakers are beginning to look towards that direction. According to Obi Emelonye, “because technology is more accessible to tell these kinds of stories and it is reflecting in the works that we do, because it is available and we are hungry and trying to make a statement in the global film industry and those statements can only be made when we can do these things and do them well (2016, pers. comm. 5 June). Funding for the movie came from personal savings and bank loans, but the director used product placement to secure corporate sponsorship and endorsement. This approach was different when compared to the traditional Nollywood system which was dominated by the small-scale movie marketers in Alaba International Market, a popular shopping destination located in Lagos.

*Figure 2: Last Flight to Abuja (2012)*
Taxi Driver: Oko Ashewo (2015), directed by Daniel Oriahi, is another film that falls into the category of ‘new’ Nollywood cinema. It starred known names in Nollywood such as Odunlade Adekola, Femi Jacobs, Ijeoma Grace Agu and Hafeez Oyetoro. The 110–minute comedy thriller, made with a budget of ₦10,000,000 (US$60,000), was produced by FilmOne production and distribution. The company which is one of those media corporations that are trying to introduce a corporate structure in Nollywood (see chapter 6), has individuals from other structured sectors of the economy that have now come into filmmaking. According to Don Omope, who is the head of content and strategy at FilmOne, “we intend to professionalise the industry, people are now coming with their discipline of purpose, with their project management skills and strong commercial etiquette and knowledge” (2016, pers. comm. October). The picture and sound quality of Taxi Driver: Oko Ashewo coupled with the setting of the movie around the city of Lagos, showcasing creative shots that depict a beautiful city, is nothing compared to the numerous muddled pictures associated with the industry (see Made in Nollywood min. 13:22 – 13:28; 32:27 – 32:39). There was extensive use of handheld
stabilising systems, and drones. During my interview with Don Omope, he pointed out that “Taxi Driver was the third-highest grossing film in 2015 in Nigeria and the number one film on return on investment. The return on investment is how much we made the film for and how much the film brought back home to investors” (2016, pers. comm. October). At the time of release, Taxi Driver was successful at the box office, breaking records to gain the highest opening weekend gross for the year (Odejimi 2016). The movie competed for the top spot in its first week of release with Hollywood blockbusters such as Spectre (2015). It grossed over ₦20,000,000 (US$80,000) at the cinemas, making it the third highest grossing Nigerian film in 2015.

The film Taxi Driver: Oko Ashewo, which was set in the busy city of Lagos, the commercial capital of Nigeria, tells the story of how Adigun (Femi Jacobs) comes to Lagos for the first time to claim a taxi that was left as an inheritance by his father. Upon inheriting the taxi, he decides to become a cab driver in Lagos. The movie chronicles his encounters with the multitude of odd characters that he meets on the job. Some of such characters in the movie include Della the prostitute, Kakanfo the unseen vigilante, the notorious assassins ‘three wise men’, and the Godfather, Baba Mistura. Taxi Driver: Oko Ashewo was among the 8 Nollywood films that were screened during the ‘City to City’ spotlight at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2016.

Figure 3: Behind-the-scene (BTS) Taxi Driver: Oko Ashewo (2015)
5.2 Producing for the web

In the last decade, digital media has greatly expanded the ways in which stories could be told. The Internet offers content producers access to a vast audience, and Nigerian content producers are not missing out on this global trend. Emerging and established Nigerian filmmakers operate in a world where social media and networking tools such as Facebook, YouTube,
Instagram and Twitter are connecting filmmakers directly with audiences that are willing to pay for content. For Chris Anderson (2006), “the main effect of all this connectivity is unlimited and unfiltered access to culture and content of all sorts, from the mainstream to the farthest fringe of the underground” (Anderson 2006, p. 2). The advent of digital technologies and the skyrocketing demand for online video is creating “a new generation of digerati who have grown up with the Internet and who relate to content in a completely new way” (Harries 2007, p. 31). The Internet and devices are enhancing a lot of opportunities for content producers to get into the industry. As Remi Ogunpitan observes, producers now are creating all kinds of content with smartphones. They shoot with their smartphone, edit with an app on the phone, and disseminate to audiences through Snapchat or Facebook (2016, pers. comm. September). As Kaufman and Mohan (2008, p. 2) observe, digital technologies have become the “new tools of speech in the digital age”.

Niche films benefit from niche strategies that target core audiences and foster a sense of community; the Internet has made it easier to employ such strategies (Nime 2012, p. 242). According to Tope Oshin, what we are trying to do now is to create hybrids, trying to see what can work; we are putting our movies online and on mobile devices (2016, pers. Comm. 29 September).

At this point, in the digital era, Nigerian content producers are approaching and developing their practice in new ways. One interesting example is Gidi Up, a Nigerian web drama series created by Jadesola Osiberu and produced by Ndani TV. GT Bank, a commercial bank with its major operations in Nigeria sponsored the series. Ndani TV is an online digital content platform on YouTube that showcases the best of contemporary African screen content. Launched in 2012, the online platform has about 93,033 subscribers with over 20 million views on YouTube. The first season of the web series Gidi Up, which was aired online through the Ndani TV web channel in 2013, was an eight-part web mini series with a length of approximately eight minutes per episode. The series features O. C. Ukeje, Deyemi Okanlawon and Somkele Iyamah in lead roles and is a thrilling adventure centred on the lives of four friends in pursuit of happiness, success and independence. It chronicles the challenges they face at every step of the way in their quest to achieve their
dreams. The second season however featured full 30-minute episodes in a television and web series, with the first season combined together, re-edited and aired on television as the pilot episode for season two. The episodes for season two was released online from 23 June – 29 September 2014, on Ndani TV YouTube platform and currently, it has over 700 thousand views. The title of the series is culled from the popular term ‘Las Gidi’, a nickname for Lagos city (Kazeem 2013). The series which was produced with high production values has interesting and rich storylines, the brilliant cinematography captured the beautiful city of Lagos. In 2014 at the Nollywood Movies Awards, Gidi up got nominated in the Best TV/web series category.

**Figure 4: Gidi Up on Ndani TV**

[Image: Screenshot of Ndani TV on YouTube (accessed on 10 August 2017)]

_Jenifa’s Diary_ also delineates innovative models screen content creators in Nigeria are exploring to tell their stories. The Nigerian comedy web series created by notable Nollywood star Funke Akindele is about a young, uneducated but determined woman, Suliat, also known as Jenifa, who journeys to Lagos in pursuit of a better life. The series starring Funke Akindele, Folarin ‘Falz’ Falana, Olayade Juliana and Lota Chukwu, was a spinoff from the Nollywood blockbuster movies, _Jenifa_ (2008) and _Return of_
"Jenifa" (2012). With themes exploring love, friendship, family and self-actualisation, the first season of the series currently has over 2.5 million views on SceneOne TV, a digital content platform on YouTube. The platform SceneOne TV, which joined YouTube on June 9, 2015 has over 90 thousand subscribers with more than 20 million views. "Jenifa’s Diary" which is also streaming online via IROKO TV and is currently in its ninth season. Initial funding for the production of the web series came from Funke Akindele’s personal savings and funds she raised from her endorsement deals. The emerging trends discussed above do not imply the demise of the traditional approach to screen content production in Nollywood, but rather refer to the multiple possibilities arising from the use of digital cinematic tools and the Internet in producing and circulating content.

Figure 5: "Jenifa’s Diary" on SceneOne TV

Image available at https://sceneone.tv (accessed on 10 August 2017)

5.3 Internet-based funding models

The traditional funding models for screen production as seen in other film industries such as Hollywood, Bollywood, etc. does not really exist in Nigeria. The challenges associated with accessing funds for creative projects in Nigeria have been exacerbated by the informal nature of the industry. The unavailability of a formal structure has provided very little opportunity for...
moviemakers to access corporate and institutional finance. Official data and statistics which are essential prerequisites for private investors to assess the potential return on investment (La Torre 2014, p. 139) and good metrics are not readily available. While some local financial institutions have expressed an interest in supporting Nollywood in recent years, loans are generally only awarded at extremely high interest rates and for very short spans of time. Having access to finance for film projects play a significant role in stimulating growth and development of any film industry. In Nollywood, obtaining funds for movie projects is one of the most challenging issues facing aspiring and established filmmakers in Nigeria. Most of the movie projects which are produced with extremely low budgets, ranging from US$10,000 – US$400,000, have typically relied on funds provided by friends, family or small-scale movie marketers.

From the early days of filmmaking in Nigeria, finance has always been a barrier to the development of the industry. Unlike many other movie industries around the world, the Nigerian film industry has advanced over the years without the significant contribution from the government, corporate or international investment. It is worth noting that recently, there has been some corporate players making their entry into the Nigerian film sector. Examples of these media corporations are Ebonylife Films, FilmOne, Inkblot Productions and Koga Studios. Notwithstanding, funding options available to established and emerging filmmakers are still usually limited. As Obiaya (2011) observes, “the industry has depended completely on local funding, and it has grown and functioned mainly in Nigeria’s huge informal sector” (Obiaya 2011, p. 143). Globally, it is evident that public funds serve as a major source of finance for filmmakers. As O’ Regan (2002) points out, “while the US government assists Hollywood’s commercial ends, in other national cinemas there is a higher degree of formative government assistance involved in creating and sustaining them” (O’Regan 2002, p. 140). Currently in Nollywood, the absence of significant government and large scale corporate funding has stimulated some tech-savvy content creators to bypass (or work alongside) traditional Nollywood funding models to source contributions from audiences.
through online platforms. The concept of crowdfunding relies on the passion, the content and people’s love for the story the filmmaker is about to tell.

The process of crowdfunding has developed using the capacities of social networks. The interactions between campaign creators and financiers are facilitated through the use of social media and dedicated online funding platforms. As Wisse-Huiskes (2017, p. 10) acknowledges, “the most important difference between ‘traditional friends and family finance’ and crowdfunding is the usage of social media to broaden the reach of the fundraising campaigns”. Crowdfunding campaigns have become popular in some parts of the world like the US and UK, but in Nigeria, the model is still a relatively new phenomenon. However, it is worth noting that in many Nollywood productions, producers adopt the strategy of sourcing contributions from friends and family. As Walter Taylaur points out, “in most of my productions, I usually operate on the old Nollywood or the old system whereby you raise funds through family and friends” (2016, pers. comm). So, the four main crowdfunding models available – Credit-based, Donation-based, Reward-based, and Equity-based – could offer a more formalised way for Nollywood content producers to source contributions from individuals as they have always done. The four main crowdfunding models present distinct options for content producers; Credit-based: in this model, producers borrow money from financiers or backers which are repaid with interest; Donation-based: project backers or financiers contribute funds because they believe in the cause, usually backers do not receive financial benefit in return; Reward-based: in this model, project backers or financiers receive a reward with actual monetary value, often an early version of the creative work or service being funded; Equity-based: this model is focused on offering equity financing to producers, in exchange financiers receive shares of the company.

Whilst crowdfunding is still much a fledgeling phenomenon in Nigeria, the absence of a comprehensive regulatory framework has hindered crowdfunding campaigns in the country. Crowdfunding activities in Nigeria are regulated by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Nigeria. According to Wisse-Huiskes (2017), “currently there are no provisions relating
to crowdfunding in the SEC rules” (Wisse-Huiskes, 2017: 12). Furthermore, the restrictive provisions in the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 1990 and Investment and Securities Act, 2007 have created a big challenge to companies and group of individuals’ ambitious to raise money through the equity-based model of crowdfunding (Egene, 2016). However, the current restrictions do not include the donation-based model, consequently, there have been successful charity-based campaigns on the Gofundme platform. An example is a #saveMayowa campaign which raised more than US$100,000 in three days for a cancer patient Mayowa Ahmed. During this period, Mayowa who was living in Nigeria was diagnosed with bilateral Ovarian Mass Carcinoma. The need for an effective regulation has prompted the government to commence consultations with stakeholders in order to enact guidelines that will facilitate a conducive environment for crowdfunding practice is Nigeria (Salako, 2015).

Although online financing models have attained some level of success in some Western countries, they are by no means always successful in ensuring production funding or distribution in Nollywood. There are peculiar challenges associated with the Nigerian situation. Presently, some producers still maintain a passive attitude towards the model. As Walter Taylaur points out, “in Nigeria, there is a stigma attached to crowdfunding, it is almost like begging and we don’t want to be seen as beggars in the society” (2016, pers. comm). This development has discouraged many content creators from exploring the possibilities of crowdfunding. Furthermore, the problem of inadequate infrastructural facilities for effective broadband coverage makes Internet data connection in Nigeria very expensive. Crowdfunding relies heavily on the power of social media to promote their campaign, therefore the cost to conduct a successful campaign will be prohibitive. Also, the cost for backers or financiers to get involved in the process will be exorbitant. Another significant barrier to successful crowdfunding campaigns in Nigeria is the absence of a well-structured and secure online payment system. Financial transactions in Nigeria are not built on trust and most people are a little sceptical all of the time. There is a high level of suspicion associated with online payment systems, and many Nigerians believe the medium can be
easily manipulated. So, the integrity factor of the online payment system has become a critical element in the crowdfunding process.

Despite the challenges facing crowdfunding activities in Nigeria, some screen content producers in the diaspora have been able to launch successful crowdfunding drives through online funding platforms like Kickstarter. One of such successful campaigns is Damilare Sonoiki’s sitcom *African Time aka African Booty Scratcher* (2016). The hilarious sitcom is centred on the family of Nigerian immigrants in America who struggle to balance wanting a better life for their young son and also wanting him to maintain their traditional values and cultural identity. When the pilot for the sitcom was released in May 2016, it went viral on the internet. According to Venturesafrica.com:

*African Booty Scratcher* (ABS) went viral on social media, amassing over 3 million views on Facebook and over a hundred thousand views on YouTube in a little over a week. (Egbedi, 2016: para 1).

The *African Booty Scratcher* (ABS) funding campaign on Kickstarter was able to successfully raise US$31,666 from 272 backers. Another successful funding campaign on Kickstarter is the feature-length documentary titled *The Boy from Mushin* (2016). The film created by Joe Cohen is about Bisi Alimi, a Nigerian gay rights activist who is currently exiled in England. The documentary tells the story of Alimi from the time he was an HIV advocate in Nigeria to his coming out publicly to announce his sexuality. The film also provides insight about the challenges LGBT communities face in Nigeria. The funding campaign successfully raised £20,720 through 349 backers. At the time of writing this paper, both projects are still in production.

The concept of crowdfunding still remains an attractive option in Nigeria as screen producers continue to face the problem of limited funding options for film projects. Though the model might not fully fund projects, it could play a significant role in raising partial funds for projects and also serve as a platform for distribution. In order to encourage and secure a credible crowdfunding system, SEC needs to enact laws that will be essential to promote
crowdfunding activities and protect both investors and producers’ interests. Also, screen producers need to be trained on how to develop and run a successful crowdfunding campaign. They also need to develop the right skill set and capacity to convince backers about the authenticity of the creative project. There is the need for affordable Internet access in Nigeria. As Remi Ogunpitan points out, if there are affordable broadband services in the whole country, Nigeria would move with a speed of lightning because the Internet brings a lot of tools to the hands of people (2016, pers. comm)

Since the arrival of online distribution platforms such as IROKO TV, IBAKA TV, and Afrinolly in Nigeria, there has been significant growth in their use as finance sources for independent screen projects. Their entry into the Nigerian movie industry coincided with structural changes to film distribution worldwide and within this environment, parallels can be drawn between the shifts in distribution and funding. As financing options continue to expand and Nollywood values rise, ambitious Nigerian directors are working in partnership with online distribution companies to produce and show content. An example of such partnership is Obi Emelonye’s *Thy Will Be Done* (2014) which was co-produced with the online platform iROKO TV. The 86-minute drama film starring Ramsey Nouah, Mercy Johnson, Jide Kosoko and Mary Njoku tells the story of pastor (Puis) (Ramsey Nouah) and his wife (Mercy Johnson), who have their lives thrown into a state of confusion when the pastor’s first wife (Mary Njoku), who was presumed dead, shows up seven years after disappearing. According to Obi Emelonye, “this type of collaboration has become an emerging trend in the industry, even though the movie was later screened in cinemas, it was principally made for the online platform” (2016, pers. comm. 5 June). Having pioneered the concept of Internet-based distribution of Nollywood content, iROKO has currently expanded its operations to include co-producing and financing film projects. In 2016, the company established ROK Studios – a production company – after securing US$19 million in funding from investors for content development and capital funding. IROKO TV has gone ahead to make co-productions with other filmmakers such as Hazeezat (2014), Festac Town (2014), and Northern
Affair (2014), that is not meant for the cinemas at all, nor for the television stations but strictly for their online platform.

Figure 6: Thy Will Be Done (2014)


5.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has shown the ways in which contemporary Nollywood films have been, and might be, financed and produced. It has discussed the opportunities that emerge from digital devices in production, and the methods
new generation filmmakers in Nigeria are employing to become relevant in the
global marketplace. Consequently, partnerships and networks are forming
across the industry. Nollywood is now being characterised by higher budgets,
improved production values and corporate involvement. A key incentive
driving digital filmmaking in Nigeria is the cost saving factor for filmmakers. In
the context of digitalisation, reference must be made to the cost-effectiveness
of digital cinema delivery and the financing of the new digital film projects.
Digital cinema does provide a low-cost alternative to traditional techniques,
particularly the use of celluloid technology in production. Shooting with a
digital camera gives a much easier start to newcomers, which encourages
creativity and also gives new opportunities in the editing and post-production
phases. Costs are expected to be minimal once a digital system is in place,
and there are additional savings in the synergies of producing, editing, and
distributing a film all in digital format. As Chike Maduegbuna acknowledges,
“there are a lot of infrastructural challenges when working in Nigeria, so you
would not want to carry alongside huge operating cost; it just makes it too
difficult to operate, but digital tools help you to reduce those bottlenecks”
(2016, pers. comm.3 October). The significant transformations occurring in
the way Nollywood films are financed and produced have also impact on the
way these are distributed and exhibited. These emerging trends are explored
in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Formalising the distribution networks

Distribution is an important aspect of cinema because it provides the
connection to those who wish to access and consume the creative content. In
Nigeria, the platforms to connect storytellers to audiences have previously
been a barrier. As renowned Nigerian filmmaker Femi Odugbemi points out, “for many years, the industry suffered from the fact that pirates could access the finished work so easily via VHS tapes, VCD or DVD” (2016, pers. comm. 28 September). Whilst the Nigerian straight-to-video (STV) market has become saturated (see Jedlowski 2013), most producers are inventing new circulation and exhibition strategies in order to remain competitive in the industry. Critics and practitioners see the absence of a formalised distribution structure as having a devastating effect on screen content creators and their ability to earn revenue. This development has led to various attempts by the government and practitioners to formalise the distribution system in Nollywood. Even the National Distribution Framework (NDF), introduced by National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) in 2007 to regulate the structure of distribution of films, and to make it auditable, has failed to achieve the desired result. However, with the changes occurring globally in the way screen content is produced and consumed by audiences, a new generation of Nollywood practitioners have deployed innovative strategies to get their creative work to the platforms that will provide their audience access. The case studies in this chapter provide an overview of some of the changes occurring in the distribution and exhibition of Nollywood movies, and then this overview informs and examines factors driving the change.

The challenges of screen content distribution are not only peculiar to Nigeria, as Roman Lobato highlights in his article, ‘Creative industries and informal economies: Lessons from Nollywood’ (2010), “bottlenecks in distribution are a feature of almost all the film industries, resulting in a situation where a large number of films compete for a limited number of slots in the cinema and spaces on the retail shelf” (Lobato 2010, p. 345). Presently in Nollywood, the use of digital cinematic tools has been critical not only to the three phases of filmmaking, the pre-production, the production and the post-production, but is also increasingly critical to distribution. The result is that it has expanded the filmmakers’ connection to the audience. Currently, there are many Nollywood films being screened in the cinemas using digital projectors, and it is this development that has stimulated the resurgence of movie theatres in Nigeria, much earlier than could have been possible given the level of investments
that are required to establish one. As Femi Odugbemi explains, “now, we have about eighty cinema screens back across Nigeria from only a handful back in the early 2000s” (2016, pers. comm. 28 September). Also, with the proliferation of Nigerian-owned Internet-based platforms that are offering thousands of titles such as IROKO TV, IBAKA TV, Nollyland, and Afrinolly; it is evident that digital devices and the Internet are now providing access to a vast local and international film audience. As most of the international reputation of Nollywood is built around Africans on the African continent, and in the diaspora; most of these groups have found Nollywood as an important means to connect with their heritage.

Whilst new technologies offer innovative ways to connect storytellers with audiences, advances in digital distribution and exhibition seem to have drastically changed the landscape of movie piracy in Nigeria. Unlike the last decade, the use of VCDs and DVDs as distribution channels are increasingly declining. Many Nollywood filmmakers are experimenting with new circulation models and it appears the industry’s straight-to-video (STV) distribution model is radically been undermined by new technologies. Today, a number of Nollywood films are released across platforms – from theatrical release to VODs, SVODs, Television, then to DVDs and so forth – and the process has somewhat seemed to minimise the activities of pirate networks in the distribution chain. As Femi Odugbemi observes, “we are witnessing a reduction in the effects of piracy on our creative work, because we found new channels to sell our films” (2016, pers. comm. 28 Sept). The drive for theatrical exhibition by Nigerian producers is prompting a paradigm shift in the industry. As Nigerian filmmaker Niyi Akinmolayan points out, “without digital cinema Nollywood would not be where it is right now, we would still be at loggerheads with pirates. It is the DVD pirate marketers that would still be running the industry but right now that is not happening; producers are earning additional revenue by putting their films in the over thirty cinemas that we have in the country today” (2016, pers. comm. 4 Oct). Similarly, the Internet and other social networking tools have also offered opportunities to Nigerian screen content producers in the area of marketing and promotion. Currently, most Nigerian filmmakers are like a one-person army that can
create their own posters, package their own films and are able to sit at a laptop and move their content across the world to anywhere that it needs to go. As renowned Nigerian filmmaker Obi Emelonye points out, “now you can release your films in Nigeria from London without coming back. All you have to do is upload it and upload all the trailers on the portals of the distribution company or the cinema company and they would pay” (2016, pers. comm. 5 June). Before the introduction of social networking sites like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter, most Nollywood promotion activities were carried out using print and electronic media such as television, radio, newspapers, posters and so forth. The cost involved in the promotion of finished creative work was prohibitive, and also the options available for audiences to access these promotion materials whenever and wherever they wanted was limited. But now, the Internet is providing access to a vast audience at a fraction of the cost of traditional methods, and also promotion materials could be accessed using mobile devices, whenever or wherever; that makes the consumer think about the film and want to go pay and watch it.

6.1 Transnational distribution of Nigerian cinema

The cinema of Nigeria has recently been getting a lot of attention on the global stage from scholars and industry practitioners. Matthias Krings and Onookome Okome’s volume *Global Nollywood: The transnational dimensions of African video film industry* (2013) offers insight into the spread of Nollywood movies in the African continent and amongst the African diaspora scattered across the globe. As a substantial population of Africans live or settle in places far from their ancestral homelands, Nigerian cinema as a specific accessible content helps the African diaspora reconnect with their cultural identity. As Krings and Okome (2013, p. 1) point out, “Nollywood, the Nigerian video film industry has become the most visible form of cultural machine on the Africa continent”. For many years, the transnational distribution of Nollywood films has followed the logics of informality, opacity and small-scale enterprises that is associated with the domestic industry (Miller 2012). From the time when Nollywood’s video-films emerged in the early 1990s, authorised and unauthorised copies of movies from the industry have circulated the globe.
through informal distribution networks. Within the African continent, Nollywood movies were largely distributed through small scale movie marketers in open air markets. Whilst outside Africa, the movies were mainly sold in African grocery stores. During this period, the informal distribution system created avenues for pirate networks to flourish making most Nigerian content producers earn minimal revenue from the global sales of their creative content. Presently, the emergence and growth of innovative networks that use digital technologies – the internet and satellite television – has provided a stronger and easier connection to audiences in the African continent and the discrete African diasporic film audience. According to Seyi Babatope, the use of new technologies in the distribution process has allowed Nigerian films to be able to service the diaspora audience and be able to generate revenue for the filmmakers (2016, pers. comm. 29 September). Emerging trends in Nollywood’s global connection suggest that the industry is experiencing significant changes in the distribution and exhibition of its films.

In 2010, the entry of Internet-based content delivery platform IROKO, into the Nigerian film industry signalled a new phase in the transnational circulation of Nollywood content. IROKO is arguably Nigeria’s leading entertainment technology company. Founded by Nigerian IT entrepreneur Jason Njoku and Bastian Gotter, the company has pioneered video-on-demand for Nollywood content. With its corporate headquartered in Lagos, Nigeria, and offices in London, New York, Johannesburg and Kigali the platform offers a range of online digital content delivery services which include its movie streaming subscription-based website IROKO TV. Other platforms include IROKOX, IROKO Networks, IROKO Global, IROKING, IROKO+, ROK Studios, ROX. The company also maintains a range of platforms on YouTube such as IROKO TV, IgboLove, HausaLove, YourbaLove and IROKOX which all stream Nollywood content for free. IROKO is one of Africa’s most talked about startups; the company was set-up with a total of about US$35 million from private and venture capital investors such as Canal+, Kinnevik and Tiger Global Management. IROKO acquires online licenses of screen content directly from producers and streams the content online to local, regional and diaspora audiences. The approach offers original content producers in Nigeria
the benefits of the industry’s transnational success, unlike before when the producers rarely controlled the revenue generated from the transnational markets. According to Bloomberg Businessweek, most of IROKO’s viewership is from the African diaspora: 22 percent is from the United Kingdom, 33 percent from the United States, 7 percent from Canada, 11 percent from Nigeria and 27 percent from the rest of the world (Okeowo 2016). In 2015, the company paid out US$550,000 to content partners and generated 1.5 billion views through all of its distribution deals (Bright 2016). IROKO is also co-producing film projects with local filmmakers (see chapter 5), currently the company has financed and produced about 100 hours of content. With its new funding for content deals, there are plans to collaborate with up to twenty studios using data from its platform to decide what types of movies and shows to produce (Shu 2016).

Figure 7: IROKO TV Website in 2016
Image of IROKO TV. Available at: [http://irokotv.com/?v=1](http://irokotv.com/?v=1) (accessed on 10 December 2016)

Figure 8: IROKO TV on YouTube
Image of IROKO TV on YouTube. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/user/NollywoodLove](https://www.youtube.com/user/NollywoodLove) (accessed on 13 December 2016)
After obtaining a degree in chemistry from the University of Manchester in 2005, Jason Njoku was inspired to create a platform for Nollywood content after he moved into his mother’s London home and saw that she had switched from watching British soap operas to Nollywood movies (Shu 2016). Recognising how popular Nollywood was amongst the African diaspora, Njoku moved back to Nigeria with the goal of bringing Nollywood content online. He started by creating a platform on YouTube called Nollywood Love that streamed the best of Nollywood content for free. The content partnership with YouTube ensured that he got advert revenue from commercials inserted into most of the contents upload on Nollywood Love. At the beginning, Njoku was able to acquire licenses for over 250 titles from small scale movie marketers that were also financing most of the video-films produced in Nollywood at that time. He made payments ranging from US$100 – US$2000 for each title
depending on the duration of the license. After the launch of the platform, the reception from online audiences was encouraging. In less than four months, the company acquired exclusive online rights to over 500 movies from over 100 different small-scale production companies in Nigeria (Africanbusinesscentral 2015). IROKO TV streaming platform on YouTube which joined in 2009 as Nollywood Love is still operational and continues to stream Nollywood content for free. It currently has over 800 thousand subscribers with more than 220 million views. Jason Njoku’s mission is to create global access to Nollywood content led to the creation of IROKO’s dedicated streaming platform for IROKO TV which was launched in 2012, and had over 500,000 registered users in under six months. In that year alone, the subscription-based platform received 152 million views with 90% of the views originating from outside Africa. IROKO TV’s premium option on its subscription-based platform is currently US$7.99 for a month access and US$14.99 for a 3-month plan.

The idea behind the creation of IROKO at Inception was to connect the African diaspora to content from Nollywood, but IROKO's activities over the years have expanded to create various platforms to service both local and regional markets in Africa. IROKO with its affiliates has been able to connect film audiences in the continent of Africa to Nollywood content, especially those consumers that have access to quality and uninterrupted Internet connection. However, extremely expensive data packages and slow data speeds have made it virtually impossible to stream feature-length films in real time in most parts of Africa including Nigeria. For example, in Nigeria, over 90 million people have access to the internet (NCC.gov.ng 2016), but most of these Internet users have limited access to a broadband connection. Most consumers make use of their smartphones to access the web which is relatively cheaper and effective, broadband services extremely expensive and are mainly available in major cities like Lagos and Abuja. This development has required difficult workarounds from IROKO in order for users in Africa to have easy access to content on its various platforms. The bulk of IROKO’s operation is still been carried out in its Lagos headquarters and like many other businesses operating in Nigeria, there are enormous constraints that
undermine their operational capacity. The problems of infrastructural facilities, like power, transportation, telecommunication, etc. have contributed towards a harsh business environment for IROKO. As (Miller 2016) notes, “this environment is not just more challenging than Silicon Valley, London, or New York, but also significantly more challenging than in the major cities of southern Africa or East Africa” (Miller 2016, Chapter. 5, Section. 8, para. 1). Also, the informal nature of the Nigerian film industry has continued to hinder the smooth process of acquiring rights to distribute and exhibit Nollywood content online, the small-scale film marketers in Alaba and Idumota that have copyrights to most of these Nollywood movies have operated for many years without documentation. For the IROKO team, this has become a huge challenge, there have been some legal issues around copyright infringements, Jason Njoku at some stage had to start filing notices under the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) in order to remove unauthorised clips from YouTube and other sites. Lastly, getting African users mostly those in sub-Saharan to pay online is still a major obstacle. Many people see online payment system as unsafe, easy to manipulate and prone to fraud. The challenges associated with online payment systems in most parts of Africa has made it difficult for African users to access the full services of IROKO most especially his subscription based platform IROKO TV.

6.2 Distribution through mobile devices

In the last two decades, advances in technology have created innovative methods of screen content acquisition. In Africa, mobile technology has become prominent in terms of creating platforms for producers to distribute their creative contents and for audiences to access these contents while on the go. Screen content producers in Nollywood are leveraging on these mobile devices as a means of distribution. Currently, in Nigeria, there is a huge number and variety of mobile devices varying from smartphones to IPads and tablets. According to the Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC), there are over 150,000,000 million mobile telephone subscribers in Nigeria (NCC.gov.ng 2016). Mobile Internet data access in Nigeria is also increasing; in a country of over 170 million people, there are over 90 million
Internet users in Nigeria (Punch 2016). The shortage of movie theatres and the decline in DVD distribution is helping to stimulate a leap towards mobile technology in Nigeria as a means of screen content distribution.

Afrinolly is a mobile application allowing users to watch African movies, short films, music videos and trailers produced in African movie markets, most especially Nollywood. The Internet-based content delivery platform which was founded by Chike Maduegbuna got started during the Google sponsored Android Developer Challenge in 2011. At that time, Afrinolly was built to provide information about the movie industry in Africa which was mainly dominated by Nollywood. Afrinolly as an app won the Sub-Sahara Entertainment category, with a $25,000 cash prize. As Chike Maduegbuna explains, we developed Afrinolly as authoritative database for information relating to the Nigerian film industry including new releases, trailers, cinema screening schedule, cast, reviews etc. (2016, pers. comm. 3 October).

Although Afrinolly is connecting content producers and audiences in ways that previously would not have been conceivable, monetising the contents on its platform has remained a challenge. In Africa, charging consumers for content is not very lucrative due to challenges around payment systems. For instance, in Nigeria and most sub-Sahara countries, the payment systems are not well developed. Despite the advances in technology, using your standard debit and credit cards to carry out financial transactions at local and rural levels might not be successful. This restriction is a major obstacle to the development of online content distribution and e-commerce. Despite the pitfalls around payment systems, Afrinolly is partnering with leading telecommunication company MTN in an effort to distribute and monetise screen content on its networks. South African owned MTN with its headquarters in Johannesburg, is arguably one of biggest telecommunication platform in Africa with over 200 million subscribers in more than 20 countries. The partnership provided subscribers to the MTN network the opportunity to access African content, especially from Nollywood on the Afrinolly platform. The app has recorded over four million downloads with Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kenya, South-Africa, United Kingdom, and the United States being the biggest user countries (Kunateh 2015).
Along with the move toward developing new ways to connect film audiences to filmmakers, the company in 2015 introduced Afrinolly Marketplace, which is a facility within the Afrinolly app that allows for secure distribution of screen content amongst mobile phone users in Nigeria and other parts the world. The platform is developed to protect creative content from movie pirates, it allows consumers to buy full-length movies. They can either stream these movies or download and then watch them at home offline. As Maduegbuna points out, “when we distribute on mobile devices, we use Digital Rights Management (DRM) technology so the content can not be pirated” (2016, pers. comm. Oct). The model offers screen producers an alternative income stream, a stream which the movie pirates are not short circuiting. Furthermore, Afrinolly is trying to introduce production management tools in Nollywood in order to lessen redundancies and creative waste in the industry. They have built a creative hub within their headquarters in Lagos which is assisting in providing backward integration to reduce the cost of production for emerging and established Nigerian filmmakers. The well-equipped production facility is for use by filmmakers who might want to co-produce with them, the idea was inspired the YouTube space in London. Cinema-4-Change is a developmental initiative of Afrinolly in partnership with Ford Foundation, the project was aimed at engaging emerging filmmakers to produce short films for mobile devices. Cinema-4-Change was tailored to integrate filmmakers that can develop storylines and make short films that communicate and drive social-change in Nigeria. Short films that were made include Tolu Fagbure My Brother’s Keeper; Ishaya Bako Henna; Jay-Franklyn Jituboh Once; Soji Ogunaike The Dutiful Wife; Victor Sanchez Aghahowa The Road; Chioma The Scheme of Things; Chineze Anyaene The Space Between; and Ejiro Onobrakpor Timothy. The films were then distributed to audiences using mobile devices.

Figure 10: Afrinolly app
Image of Afrinolly app. Available at: https://www.afrinolly.com (accessed on 12 November 2016)
6.3 The resurgence of Multiplex Cinemas

The straight-to-video (STV) distribution model associated with the Nigerian film industry appears to be experiencing a significant shift. As Nigerian filmmakers continue to lament the inadequate structure for distribution of films, which makes it difficult for them to remain in business, it appears that digital cinema is now providing prospects for filmmakers to exhibit their movies to a vast and paying audience. With the increasing surge of movie theatres in Nigeria, filmmakers now have the opportunity to take their creative content to the cinemas directly and to make money from there, before exploring other distribution channels such as VOD, SVOD, Television, DVD and so forth. From about fifteen screens in Nigeria a decade ago, there are presently over 80 digital screens in the country. Already, the industry pioneers, Silverbird Cinemas, Filmhouse Cinemas and Genesis Deluxe Cinemas, among others, have so far invested over N10 billion naira (US$61.4 million) in the big screen (Okpamen 2014).

The rebirth of the cinema culture in Nigeria commenced in 2004 when Silverbird Cinemas opened its first outlet on Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria. As Connor Ryan notes in his article ‘New Nollywood: A sketch of Nollywood’s
metropolitan new style’ (2015), “The construction of the country’s first multiscreen cinema in an affluent pocket of urban development signalled a departure from the cinema culture of the 1970s and 1980s, which flourished around some thirty cinema halls located across Lagos that brought Americans, Chinese, Indian, and some Nigerian films to broad urban audiences until these theaters closed in the early 1990s” (Ryan 2015, p. 59). Silverbird Cinemas currently has eight outlets spread across major Nigerian cities such as Lagos, Abuja, Portharcourt and Uyo. The relative success of the Silverbird franchise sparked renewed interest in cinema exhibition. As Genesis Deluxe Cinemas began exhibiting movies in 2011, it presently has seven cinema outlets in Lagos, Abuja, Owerri, Effurun and Port Harcourt. Ozone Cinemas, with 619 luxury seats, commenced its film exhibition business in 2008; it currently has only one cinema located at Domino Mall in Yaba, Lagos. The latest entrant in film exhibition in Nigeria, Filmhouse Cinemas has eleven cinemas across Nigeria: four in Lagos, two in Ibadan, and one each in Calabar, Kano, Portharcourt, Akure and Asaba. The company commenced operation in December 2012 and is focused on developing innovative multiplex cinemas across the country.

Table 8: List of movie theatres in Nigeria (November 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Filmhouse</td>
<td>Lekki, Lagos state</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinemas</td>
<td>Surulere, Lagos state</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apapa, Lagos state</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ikoyi, Lagos state</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Calabar, Cross River state</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dugbe, Oyo state</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samonda, Oyo state</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Portharcourt, Rivers state</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Akure, Ondo state</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kano, Kano state,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asaba, Delta state</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinema Name</td>
<td>Location Details</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Silverbird Cinemas | Victoria Island, Lagos state  
Ikeja, Lagos state  
Festac, Lagos state  
SEC Abuja, Federal Capital Territory (FCT)  
Jabi Lake Mall Abuja, Federal Capital Territory (FCT)  
Uyo, Akwa Ibom state  
Warri, Delta state,  
Portharcourt, Rivers state | 8     |
| Ozone Cinemas     | Yaba, Lagos state                                                               | 1     |
| Genesis Deluxe Cinemas | Lekki, Lagos state  
MaryLand, Lagos state  
Ajah, Lagos state  
Portharcourt, Rivers state  
Abuja, Federal Capital Territory (FCT)  
Owerri, Imo state  
Effurun, Delta state | 7     |

Filmhouse Cinemas is probably the leading cinema brand in Nigeria, founded by Kene Mkparu; they are currently implementing a strategic development plan to roll out twenty-five cinemas over a six-year period (Filmhouse 2016). Mkparu has been active in the business of film production and exhibition for over 24 years, he once was a senior executive with Odeon Cinemas in the UK before his return to Nigeria to establish Filmhouse Cinemas in the country’s fledgeling cinema industry. In 2014, African Capital Alliance (ACA), a private equity fund, invested in Filmhouse in order to further diversify its operations, and tap into another attractive segment of the film industry. The management team launched FilmOne, a distribution and production company as a subsidiary (Acagp.com 2016). According to Don Omope, “FilmOne distribution is perhaps one of the most, if not the most aggressive company within the movie space in Nigeria” (2016, pers. comm. 2 October). The company
distributed three out of the top five highest grossing films in Nigeria in 2016. They include *The Wedding Party* (2016), *Ghana Must Go* (2016), and *Wives on Strike* (2016). Unlike the examples of the past, when there were just a few movie theatres in Nigeria that used film prints in projecting movies, Filmhouse Cinemas makes use of digital projectors. This trend is now encouraging producers to actually invest more on high-end digital production equipment, which in turn improves the quality of their movies. Along with its effort to redefine the premium cinema experience in Nigeria, Filmhouse entered into partnership with world leading chain cinema IMAX Corporation and established an IMAX theatre in Lagos, which is the first in West Africa. The IMAX theatre network is among the most important and successful theatrical distribution platforms, delivering the world’s best cinematic presentations using proprietary IMAX, IMAX 3D, and IMAX DMR technology (Imax.com 2016). As Don Omope points out, our mission is to establish the best movie-going experience in Nigeria, by delivering an immersive and differentiated experience previously unavailable to Nigerian moviegoers. Within five years, Filmhouse has grown to be one of the most influential companies in Nigeria within the film exhibition sector.

In line with the changing film-going culture in Nigeria, there are still challenges around the ratio of movie theatres to the number of people in Nigeria. According to the Director-General of National Population Commission of Nigeria, Ghaji Bello, the current population of Nigeria stands at 182 million, with more than half of its citizens under 30 years of age (Population.gov.ng 2016). During the time of writing this thesis, there are about twenty-seven cinemas operating in Nigeria (see table 8). The need to open more cinemas has become imperative. When more cinemas are opened, it offers producers the opportunity to have more screening venues to exhibit their films. The availability of more movie theatres provides producers with the opportunity to make more money from their films. This development could help increase corporate investment in Nollywood due to is a wider cinematic distribution outlet for the films to be successful.

*Figure 12: Filmhouse Imax Cinema at Lekki, Lagos*
6.4 Chapter summary

As discussed in this chapter, while practices of informal production and distribution models have dominated the Nigerian film industry since the early 1990s, it is evident that emerging trends in Nollywood suggest that content producers are inventing new approaches to screen content distribution and exhibition. The new generation of Nigerian filmmakers is now captivated by big budget film projects, innovative Internet-based distribution models, mainstream theatrical releases, film festival circuits and global film audiences. This makes it possible for practitioners to move from solely earning a substantial fee for their creative content to establishing multiple revenue streams in a competitive marketplace. Although multiple revenue streams are not entirely a new phenomenon in Nollywood: in the mid-2000s, there were always ad hoc theatrical screenings and sales to television, and also revenue from sales of North America rights. However, the concept or idea of formalising every aspect of the process was perhaps not as important then; but today, it is important and in fact, vital. The Informality of Nollywood’s distribution has over the years limited the capacity of some its films to acquire
international distribution deals or attract International mainstream film audiences. As Jedlowski (2013, p. 40) observes, “the economy of small numbers that characterised Nigerian videos filmmaking in past years has probably ceased to be viable, and the pirate transnationalism that underwrote Nollywood’s global success is today explicitly seen as a threat to the further expansion of the Nigerian video industry”. The DVD distribution model might have its shortcoming on the industry due to the operations of pirate networks that sway activities in markets such as Alaba and Idumota, but the DVD market still remains an essential part of the distribution process. There are audiences that might not want to go to the movie theatres, they just want to go buy their DVDs and watch it at home. Online distribution might be a good alternative to DVDs but issues of expensive Internet access, slow data speeds and online content piracy have continued to pose problems for content producers and consumers in most sub-Saharan African countries like Nigeria. The next chapter concludes the thesis with a discussion around significant issues arising from this study’s findings.
Chapter 7: Conclusion – The Future of Nollywood and the need for policy

This thesis has examined significant changes that are occurring in Nollywood caused by the appropriation of digital technology by new generation filmmakers in Nigeria. While many scholars have offered compelling accounts of Nollywood’s informal production and distribution models, there has been a limited discussion on the impact of emerging digital trends on market dynamics, consumer behaviour and economic models of Nigerian storytellers. The Nigerian film industry is still undergoing a period of change and re-structuring, it is one of the few movie industries in the world that is self-sustaining. As Jedlowski (2013, p. 27) observes, “whereas film industries elsewhere in the world tend to be organised around the activity of a few big production and distribution companies, the Nigerian video industry comprises a constellation of small enterprises, which disappear and reappear according to economic conditions”. Presently, with substantial shifts in technology creating new opportunities as well as challenges, industry practitioners need to keep inventing innovative techniques in order to navigate the complex web of financing, producing, distributing and exhibiting their films both in domestic and international markets. New forms of Internet-based circulation models are fundamentally changing the distribution landscape but with the thousands of titles available online, the challenge for most screen content producers in Nigeria today is how to generate revenue from their creative work in a period of content abundance, and diminishing appetite to pay for content due to the availability of free content online.

In order to maximise opportunities for Nollywood films in the current digital environment, screen content producers will need to be more engaged and educated about prospects available to them, understanding and using their expertise to achieve desirable results. The government needs to address changes in the industry by providing regulation, effective copyright regime and leading conversation about the challenges faced by industry practitioners. It is
evident that the digitalisation of the filmmaking practice in Nollywood has pushed traditional industry set-ups into radical restructuring, it is important to re-evaluate practices in the industry in light of the changing market. In response to the four research questions that guided this study, namely: What is the current state of filmmaking in Nollywood? What new approaches to screen content production, distribution and exhibition are emerging in Nigeria? How do these emerging trends impact screen content production and circulation in Nigeria? What are the policy implications on the industry? Understanding how the industry’s informality is hindering growth in a changing global business marketplace has become very vital to development. From its inception, Nollywood’s informal style of operation has contributed in no small measure to its growth and popularity, but with the current level of global attention the industry is receiving now due to its emergence as a formidable regional cinema, it has become imperative that government and practitioners in the Nollywood need to formalise the Industry and take advantage of market developments. As the global film industry become more competitive, access to official data and reliable statistics about Nollywood is significant for planning, and planning is critical to efficiency and development.

In the midst of significant changes in the film industry, approach to intellectual property rights appears to be experiencing substantial changes. For many years In Nollywood, the outright sales of rights for a flat fee was often the best option in the informal market and filmmakers have had to work such arrangements. Currently, with the opportunities offered by digital distribution and exhibition, producers are becoming aware of the prospects of retaining rights to their work and protecting their intellectual property. Whilst previously the signing away of rights was an inevitable part of the deal of getting into distribution deals with small-scale movie marketers in Alaba market and elsewhere, nowadays content producers are to opting to retain rights to the creative work. This development raises important issues around the future of filmmaking in Nigeria and the need for an effective policy and regulation in the digital age. The government regulatory agency that oversees the administration of copyright laws in Nigeria, the Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) has to re-evaluate its strategies in order to explore the
means of working with a range of approaches, as the industry and the market respond to ongoing and significant change. The agency which was first established as the Nigeria Copyright Council (NCC) in 1989 and then upgraded as a commission in 1996 has been bogged down by issues of underfunding and government bureaucracy (Miller 2016). One of the major challenges of the Nigerian film industry today is the lack of operational government policy concerning film or art. According to Niyi Akinmolayan, there is no noticeable film policy in Nigeria, and the reason is this: the industry existed before the government noticed it. People practically started the industry themselves from nothing (2016, pers. comm. 4 October). With Nigeria officially becoming Africa’s biggest economy in 2014, and the motion pictures, sound recording and music production sector constituting 1.4 percent of the country’s GDP (Liston 2014), there is need for the government to be fully involved because the industry has become an economic force that is generating a lot of revenue and getting a lot of interest globally.

Since attaining independence from the colonial administration, there have been several attempts by the Nigerian government to create a policy framework specific to the film industry. One of the earliest attempts by the Nigerian government to regulate the film industry dates back to 1963, with the ‘Cinematographic Act’ that replaced all existing cinematographic laws enacted by the colonial administration. The Cinematographic Act of 1963 which was an amendment of the Cinematographic Ordinance No 20 of 1933, performed more of a censorship role in the industry, it restricted individuals from exhibiting films in Nigeria without first receiving approval from Federal Board of Film Censors (Mwalimu 2009, p. 684). Another attempt was The Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree promulgated by the federal military government in 1972 aimed at encouraging local participation in a number of economic activities, the ‘Indigenisation decree’ which restricted the involvement of foreign interest in a number of industries gave exclusive monopoly for the distribution and exhibition of films to Nigerians. Although the decree was aimed at developing the local film industry, it had no direct impact on production and distribution of local content. Most of the foreigners operating in the film sector merely naturalised as Nigerians or used Nigerian fronts in their
operations especially in the distribution and exhibition of foreign films from Hollywood, Bollywood and Chinese cinema. However, In 1979 in a bid to support and also use the local film industry as a tool for national mobilisation towards nation building, the federal government established the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC), through the Decree (ACT) No. 61 of 1979, as a parastatal organisation under the Federal Ministry of Information. The corporation was given the mandate to plan, develop and promote the film industry, produce films both for domestic and international markets, support local filmmakers by training, funding and providing production and postproduction facilities, and to preserve important Nigerian films. However, since the inception of NFC, most of its functions have been hampered by inadequate funding, government bureaucracy and mismanagement. The corporation has continued to struggle to be relevant in the local film industry (Miller 2016). As of today, there are only a handful of achievements that could be credited to NFC in its over 35 years of existence, these include the establishment of National Film Institute in Jos, the creation of Zuma film festival formerly known as National Film Festival and archiving of notable Nigerian films. The advent of the Nigerian Video-Film industry led to the establishment of National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB), under ACT No. 85 of 1993, as the official regulatory agency for the film and video sector of the Nigerian economy. Unlike the Federal Board of Film Censorship which was empowered by the Cinematographic Act of 1963 to regulate the exhibition of films in Nigeria, NFVCB censorship functions cover both film and video formats. The board of NFVCB does not usually involve itself in the filmmaking process but rather with the finished work.

The current digital environment demands new approaches to screen practice, with this in mind, a new policy framework for the industry should be able to build on progress made so far by industry practitioners. The need to overhaul NFC in a changing business environment is long overdue. It is worth noting that there is a bill currently before the National Assembly (Nigerian Parliament) tilted the Nigerian Film Commission Bill aimed at repositioning NFC to meet the challenges of an emerging film industry. Also, as of 2016, the government of Muhammadu Buhari is pushing for a new industry. 
framework called the Motion Picture Practitioners Council of Nigeria Bill (MOPICON). The bill which is now immersed in a lot of controversies aims to regulate, administer and control the motion picture practice in Nigeria. For the purpose of fast-tracking the passage of the bill into law, a 28-member committee was inaugurated by the Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed. The committee comprises of representatives from various guilds and association, as well as Nigerian Film Corporation, National Film and Video Censors Board, Nigerian Copyrights Commission and the Ministry of Information and Culture. Apart from having an operational policy in place, there is a need for consistency on the part of the government. As Remi Ogunpitan highlights, “the problem in our film and the broadcast sector is unsustainable attention to policies, and different priorities by different government” (2016, pers. comm. 28 September). The Nigerian government has to approach its policies and regulations with a pattern that will ensure sustainable growth and development in the industry.

7.1 Final thoughts

It is evident that new technologies are offering practitioners in the Nigerian film industry promising prospects in a competitive and changing global marketplace. The digitalisation of the filmmaking process and distribution models have obviously opened multiple revenue sources for producers, compared to when the industry was held hostage by small-scale DVD distribution companies. However, the industry is a work in progress, because so far, the Nigerian filmmaker is basically the one who is doing everything, which need not be the case. If Nollywood is to become a major player in the global marketplace, it needs to formalise its operations by involving professionals from other sectors in its filmmaking strategies: lawyers, engineers, bankers, technicians, and so forth. And all of this is happening gradually. The entry of corporate industry players, like FilmOne Production and Distribution, Koga Studios, Ebonylife Films, Inkblot Productions and so forth, appears to be changing the structure of Nollywood. These companies are expanding their networks to bring professionalism to the business, they are funding film projects, building more cinemas, even in remote areas where
one would think that multiplex cinemas could not be situated. The progressive rate of corporate investment in Nollywood signals a new phase in the industry, one that looks quite promising.

Furthermore, to ensure Nollywood continues to resonate with film audiences in the African continent and elsewhere, there has to be a more robust approach to improve the technical standard of the industry. There is need to provide sufficient well-equipped training facilities for filmmakers because one of the problems in Nollywood is that most of its practitioners are self-starters. There are people who grab their camera because they feel they have the talent to tell a story, and they have become filmmakers. What is missing there is a proper education in how to tell a story using film as a medium. The capacity to understand and be responsible for your creative ideas are all part of what film school is all about. Film school is not just about equipment handling. Film school is about film appreciation: the capacity to see how creativity and art in cinema have evolved over many years. But I think more than anything, it is about acquiring that intellectual heft to begin to select topics and themes and stories that matter, not just to make films for making films but to make films that provoke thought, films that reflect an educated mind. Not every good filmmaker needs to go to a film school or college but every good filmmaker needs to understand that there is a science and an art to filmmaking.

7.2 Further Research

Researching the Nigerian film industry has offered an interesting insight into a community that, despite its challenges, has shown the commitment to maintain its storytelling tradition. In this thesis, discussions about the industry have thrown up various issues that have not been covered extensively. Internet-based distribution and digital exhibition is an emergent element in the dynamic changing landscape of content distribution in Nollywood. The trend has caused audiences to fragment across multiple platforms. This research did not cover deeply the subject of the changing screen culture of Nollywood’s audiences. This is one area of further inquiry that needs to be addressed, specifically how social media and other networking platforms are providing
access to Nollywood content. How are audiences influencing content creation through participatory culture? How are user-generated contents significant to Nollywood content producers? This is important as the circulation of media content – across different media systems, competing media economics and national borders – depends heavily on consumers’ active participation (Jenkins 2006, p. 3). Another area of enquiry this research highlighted was the topic of copyright and intellectual property. As content producers become knowledgeable about the prospects of commercial ownership, and the economic benefits of exploitation of their creative content online (Iordanova 2012), coupled with the changing consumer pattern of film audiences and their ability to easily access content via digital devices, there is the need to explore the economic and social elements of intellectual property theft and copyright infringement.

Furthermore, as funding continues to be a barrier to film practice in Nigeria, there is a need for more research into innovative ways of financing and generating multiple revenue streams for filmmakers. As the concept of crowdfunding and crowdsourcing continues to gather momentum globally, it is important to know how viable these models could be in the Nigerian situation. As Gubbins suggests, crowdfunding has achieved some degree of industry credibility, mostly due to activist cinema (Gubbins 2012). It will be interesting to know how activist cinema in Nigeria could be developed through crowdfunding? There is also a need to look at how crowdfunding could be instrumental in the circulation of screen content. It is evident that digital technology has played an important role in the development of cinema in Nigeria. As technological innovations continue to occur, the prospects for the Nigerian film industry will be limitless.
Appendix 1: Ethics committee approval to conduct interviews in Nigeria

2015/438 - Variation Approved

rims@griffith.edu.au
to s.stockwell, m.e, research-ethics, k.madison

GRiffith University HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Dear Prof Stephen Stockwell

I write further to your application for a variation to your approved protocol "NR: Nigerian Cinema in the Digital Age: New methods and new markets" (2015/438). This request has been considered by the Office for Research.

The OR resolved to approve the requested variation:

To travel to Nigeria to conduct interviews with stakeholders in the Nigerian film industry. The researcher, who is a Nigerian citizen, will take the following steps to ensure safe field work in Nigeria:

1. Checking the Smartraveler website for the latest traveller advice
2. Ensuring that the research is not connected to the Nigerian government (i.e. no sensitive questions will be asked about the government)
3. Conducting the field work in Lagos, which is relatively safe from kidnapping and terrorist activities.

The researchers are advised to contact the Insurance & Risk Management office (373 57971) to confirm insurance cover for the overseas field trip.

This decision is subject to ratification at the next meeting of the HREC. However, you are authorised to immediately commence the revised project on this basis. I will only contact you again about this matter if the HREC raises any additional questions or comments about this variation.

Regards

Kim Madison
Human Research Ethics and Integrity
Office for Research
Bray Centre, Nathan Campus
Griffith University
ph: +61 (0)7 373 55043
Appendix 2: Sample of a signed consent form by one of the research participant Femi Odugbemi

Nigerian Cinema in the Digital Age
(New methods and new markets)
CONSENT FORM

Research Team
Senior Investigator
Professor Stephen Stockwell
Professor
School of Humanities
Griffith University
(07) 55528371
s.stockwell@griffith.edu.au

Secondary Senior Investigator
Dr Debra Beattie
Senior Lecturer
Griffith Film School
Griffith University
(07) 37350211
debra.beattie@griffith.edu.au

Member of Research Team
Ugo Ben Ebelebe
Griffith University PhD Candidate
School of Humanities
0408998685
ugo.ebelebe@griffithuni.edu.au

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research may include being interviewed on camera as part of a school of Humanities, PhD project.
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand the risks involved.
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research and expect no remuneration in relation to this project.
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary.
- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty.
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3735 4375 (or research.ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree to participate in the project and that the researcher shall have the right to produce, reproduce, transmit, exhibit, distribute and publicise in connection with the above multi-media work any or all of my voice or image.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am willing to be identified</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
<td>Femi Odogbemi</td>
<td>27/09/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Femi Odogbemi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


Curtin, M 2007, Playing to the world’s biggest audience: The globalization of chinese film and TV, University of California Press, Berkeley.


Daly, K, M 2008, Cinema 3.0: How digital and computer technologies are changing cinema.


Gerring, J 2007, Case study research: Principles and practices, Cambridge University Press (Virtual Publishing), Cambridge, UK.


Harris, R 2007, ‘Film in the age of digital distribution: The challenge for Australian content.’, Platform Paper, 12.


Himpele, J 2008, *Circuits of culture*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.


La Torre, M 2014, The economics of the audiovisual industry: Financing TV, film and web, Palgrave Pivot, Basingstoke, United Kingdom.


Tryon, C 2009, Reinventing cinema: Movies in the age of media convergence, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ.


de Valck, M 2007, Film festivals: From European Geopolitics to global Cinephilia, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam.


114

Wong, C, H, 2011, Film festivals: culture, people, and power on the global screen, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, N.J.