Nollywood: Challenges, Heritage Practice and Storytelling

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Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed: Olatunji Onaivi Offeyi (candidate)

Date: 18/04/2025

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in footnote(s). Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes, giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for deposit in the University's digital repository**.**

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to underprivileged children in Africa who have no food to eat or the ability to attend school. Do not give up; help will soon come.

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I want to thank the following people: First, my wife, Mrs Kitti Offeyi, for her steadfast support in encouraging me to strive harder in pursuing this degree, sometimes at the expense of family time. I do not take your sacrifice for granted; I greatly appreciate it. I would also like to thank Dr Katharina Zinn, the programme director, for believing in my abilities so much that she offered me a place at the admissions interview. I found this very encouraging and became more determined to justify this golden opportunity to conduct this research, which I am passionate about.

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PROLOGUE

Rationale for Undertaking This Study

The Yoruba concept of Ayanmo—often translated as 'destiny'—extends beyond its literal meaning to encompass deeper metaphysical dimensions: fate, predestination, and self-actualisation (Abimbola, 1976; Balogun, 2007). In Yoruba belief, Ayanmo is not merely a predetermined path but a guiding force that shapes one's life in alignment with divine will. This notion resonates deeply with my journey into Nollywood, which has felt less like a deliberate career choice and more like a predestined, purposeful unfolding of events. Similarly, Nollywood often portrays the journey of individuals, their destinies, and their struggles for self-actualisation, mirroring the Yoruba understanding of Ayanmo.

My engagement with Nigerian heritage is not merely an academic pursuit but a deeply personal and professional commitment. Born to a Yoruba mother and an Akoko-Edo father, I was immersed in Nigeria's cultural diversity from an early age. My heritage is not just a contextual backdrop to my research but a driving force that shapes and enriches it. Thus, exploring Nollywood is both an academic endeavour and a cultural investigation, deeply rooted in my lived experience.

My undergraduate dissertation on Nigerian highlife music *Hi-Life Music in Nigeria: A Study of Victor Uwaifo* (Offeyi, 2005) first exposed me to the thematic intersections between Nigerian music, film, and heritage. Nollywood films often incorporate traditional music and cultural practices, reinforcing my long-standing interest in the industry's role as a cultural medium. This realisation further solidified my academic focus on Nollywood's representation of identity and heritage.

My journey into Nollywood was unplanned and began unexpectedly in 2003. A poem I wrote, *Host to Win* (Offeyi, 2003, p. 48), celebrating the then Director General of the Nigerian Sports Commission, Amos Adamu, and President Olusegun Obasanjo's leadership during the 8th All Africa Games (COJA), caught the attention of journalist Frank Meke. He facilitated its publication in *The Week* magazine, which led to an invitation from the editor-in-chief, Alex Ogundadegbe. The poem's themes of leadership, identity, and cultural pride resonated with Nigeria's artistic community, unexpectedly drawing me into the industry professionally as a journalist. This experience not only deepened my understanding of Nigeria's creative landscape but also set me on the path toward my current research.

Abstract

This thesis investigates Nollywood's role in preserving and promoting Nigerian heritage through storytelling. It is approached as a heritage study with elements of film studies. Specifically, the research examines how Nollywood's narratives, production practices, and institutional structures contribute to the preservation, representation, and transmission of Nigerian cultural heritage. The central research question guiding this study is: To what extent has Nollywood storytelling contributed to Nigerian heritage? The research examines Nollywood's evolution as a cultural institution, highlighting its impact on African heritage narratives and its potential as a global ambassador for Nigerian heritage. Despite challenges such as piracy, censorship, inadequate funding, and the recurring debate about implementing the Motion Picture Practitioners Council of Nigeria (MOPICON) Bill, Nollywood has shown resilience. Issues like gender inequality and sexual harassment further highlight the need for stronger governance and ethical standards, as confirmed through interviews with industry stakeholders.

The study examines Nollywood's funding mechanisms, with a particular focus on the significant role played by the Bank of Industry in financing productions. It also examines the incorporation of oral literature, from seminal works to recent adaptations, in Nollywood films. Historical analysis contextualises films such as *Things Fall Apart* (1987) and *Living in Bondage* (1992) alongside representations of Nigerian cultures and contemporary values. Film analysis and reviews offer more apparent nuances on Nollywood's contents and relevance to studies, and audience responses indicate that 85.4% of respondents recognise Nollywood's role in shaping perceptions of Nigerian culture.

This research contributes to heritage studies by addressing gaps in understanding Nollywood's potential for cultural preservation, especially in the context of globalisation and commercialisation. Drawing on frameworks like collective memory, which emphasises the role of shared memories in cultural preservation, and Afrocentricity, a perspective that places African culture and history at the centre, the study demonstrates how Nollywood preserves cultural integrity while adapting to modern challenges. Other theoretical underpinnings include decolonisation, which involves dismantling colonial ideologies and reclaiming indigenous knowledge and traditions, and cultural appropriation, which refers to the adoption of cultural elements without permission, often leading to distortion and commodification.

By positioning Nollywood as a dynamic tool for cultural transmission, this study advances heritage discourse. It highlights its impact on Nigerian cultural identity, as well as its capacity to influence global perceptions of African heritage, albeit in ways that reflect particular rather than universal traditions.

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List of Abbreviations

BFI	British Film Institute
BOI	Bank of Industry
BOP	Bottom of the Pyramid Fund
CCIDA	Cultural and Creative Industries Development Agency (Hong Kong)
CD	Compact Disc
CGI	Computer-Generated Imagery
CIFI	Creative Industry Financing Initiative
COJA	Committee of the African Games
CSTB	Cultural, Sports and Tourism Bureau (Hong Kong)
DOS	Director of Studies
EEF	Export Expansion Facility

FDF	Film Development Fund (Hong Kong)
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FINERMAPS	Feasible, Interesting, Novel, Ethical, Relevant, Manageable, Appropriate, Potential Value, Publishable
GEF	Graduate Entrepreneurship Fund
IFDC	International Fertilizer Development Centre
MOPICON	Motion Picture Practitioners Council of Nigeria
NCMM	National Commission for Museums and Monuments
NFF	Nigeria Football Federation
NFFG	Nollywood Film Festival Germany
NFSC	Nigerian Football Supporters Club
NFVCB	National Film and Video Censors Board

NTA	Nigeria Television Authority	
PIN	Personal Identification Number	
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	
SU	Student Union	
UK	United Kingdom	
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation	
UWTSD	University of Wales Trinity Saint David	
WEF	Women Entrepreneurship Fund	
YES	Youth Entrepreneurship Support Programme	

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Introduction

Background

Nollywood, Nigeria's film industry, plays a pivotal role in preserving and projecting Nigerian culture and heritage. More than a mere collection of films, Nollywood constitutes a complex sociocultural phenomenon deeply embedded in the lived experiences of its practitioners and audiences across Nigeria, the African continent, and the African diaspora. Within Nigeria, Jedlowski (2012, pp. 431-446) demonstrates how Nollywood has become part of everyday cultural practices, circulating through both informal and formal channels and shaping popular consciousness. Extending beyond national borders, Lobato (2010, pp. 340-354) demonstrates that Nollywood's narratives and aesthetics resonate across diverse African contexts, fostering cultural proximity and regional connectedness rather than reliance on Western media. In relation to the diaspora, Krings and Okome (2013, pp.55-57) argue that Nollywood sustains symbolic and emotional ties to homeland cultures while enabling migrants to negotiate hybrid identities in transnational spaces. The industry adeptly blends mythology, oral traditions, and folklore with modern cinematic techniques, fostering cultural pride and ownership within its communities. Nollywood films, festivals, and cultural events serve as platforms for celebrating Nigerian identity and facilitating international cultural exchange (Kude, 2019, p. 153; Iseyen and Effiong, 2017, p. 75; Aondover and Aondover, 2023, pp. 1-16). However, challenges such as piracy, insufficient funding, and the encroachment of Westernisation, i.e., foreign culture, pose significant barriers to its full potential (Danbello and Dakogol, 2016). Westernisation is the process through which societies adopt Western culture and values. This can include changes in lifestyle, fashion, education, language, and social

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norms influenced by Western countries, primarily Europe and North America (Simon and Ndoma, 2016, pp. 1-7). While Westernisation can lead to modernisation and development, it sometimes poses challenges by diluting local traditions and cultural identities. Hence, Nollywood must strike a balance between modernisation and the preservation of cultural identity, a perspective echoed in scholarly analyses of the industry's evolution (Bartholomew et al., 2025, pp.62-73). Despite these obstacles, Nollywood has experienced exponential growth since the early 2000s, becoming the second-largest film industry in the world and capturing international attention as a cinematic powerhouse. The term 'Nollywood', first used by The New York Times to acknowledge its impact, has since become synonymous with Nigerian cinema (The Conversation, 2015; Onishi, 2016).

This study contributes to knowledge within heritage discourse and discipline by critically examining these challenges and proposing actionable solutions to enhance Nollywood's capacity to function as a cultural and heritage institution. Haynes (2016, pp. 3-7) notes that Nollywood's extensive production of films often revisits narratives that resonate deeply with its audience, thereby reinforcing and preserving cultural values and social norms. He further asserts that Nollywood serves as a powerful unifying cultural force on both national and Pan-African levels (Haynes, 2021, p. 1), highlighting its role in fostering a collective identity. This perspective is supported by the Nigerian Film Corporation's 2019 mandate to safeguard Nigeria's cultural heritage through film. Additionally, the NFC's recent archival workshop in Jos emphasised the importance of preserving our vintage audiovisual records, underscoring the importance of maintaining Nollywood's role in historical heritage preservation (NFC, 2025). Larkin (2008) similarly positions Nollywood within broader cultural preservation efforts in Africa. Together, these sources illustrate that Nollywood is

recognised as a cultural and heritage institution, while also confronting significant challenges in preserving its legacy.

Heritage promotion, historically associated with artefacts and physical sites, extends far beyond such parameters, as demonstrated by Nollywood's storytelling, which showcases Nigerian and African heritage to a global audience (Graham and Howard, 2012, p. 5). Drawing on Afrocentricity, such as Mazrui's (1986, pp. 239–240) concept of 'Africans as custodians of cultural pride,' this thesis situates Nollywood as a medium that channels African heritage into global consciousness while fostering cultural resilience. Furthermore, Uche (2022, p. 78) argues that Nollywood's ability to leverage digital platforms has enhanced its role in shaping global perceptions of Nigerian culture. This thesis examines the tangibility and intangibility of cultural elements in Nollywood's narratives, with a focus on their role in promoting Nigeria's heritage.

Pioneers like Hubert Ogunde, the 'Doyen of Nigerian Theatre' (Aduku, 2018, p. 9), and Eddie Ugoma, the first to use celluloid in Nigerian filmmaking, laid the foundation for this industry. Renowned actors such as Omotola Jalade Ekeinde, Genevieve Nnaji, and Pete Edochie, as well as filmmakers like Zeb Ejiro and Charles Novia, have contributed significantly to Nollywood's global recognition. Despite economic migration, many Nigerian creatives, including Robert Peters and Emeka Ike, continue to produce works that highlight Nigerian narratives. UNESCO values the industry at £4.18 billion, underscoring its cultural and economic significance (UNESCO, 2021, p. 42). Films like *Things Fall Apart* (1987) (See Figure 18) and *Living in Bondage* (1992) exemplify the industry's Afrocentric storytelling, while innovations in digital platforms have transformed its outreach.

This thesis argues that Nollywood functions as a modern griot, operating within an Afrocentric framework (Oyemade, 1990, pp. 233-238), prioritising cultural heritage, collective identity, decolonisation, and community-based narratives. Drawing from African traditions of orality and symbolism, Nollywood resonates with audiences through cultural authenticity and emotional depth. Narula's (2006, p. 25) concepts of ethos, pathos, and logos align with Afrocentric values by framing Nollywood's credibility, relatability, and logic within African cultural contexts. This approach reinforces a legacy of cultural preservation, promoting solidarity and, importantly, enlightening the audience about the deeper nuances of African identity (Asante, 1990, p. 45; Akbar, 2004, p. 73; Mazama, 2001, p. 392).

Furthermore, this research aligns with Adger's (2000, p. 349) 'cultural resilience' framework, highlighting Nollywood's adaptive strategies in preserving Nigerian heritage amidst socio-economic pressures. Similarly, Adeyemi and Olaniyi (2023, pp. 45–46) emphasise Nollywood's use of storytelling to address socio-political issues while reinforcing cultural pride. Nollywood's portrayal of Nigeria's intangible heritage—including oral literature, norms, and traditions—is explored within frameworks such as Afrocentricity, cultural dynamics, collective memory (Assmann, 1995, p. 132), heritage discourse (Smith, 2006, p. 23), and postcolonial perspectives (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986, p. 16). This hybridity is also evident in the very medium of Nollywood itself, which Onuzulike (2009, pp.176-181) describes as a cultural and technological fusion of indigenous storytelling, television aesthetics, and cinematic conventions. These backgrounds provide a robust lens through which Nollywood's narratives are contextualised as cultural artefacts of resistance and identity formation.

This thesis argues that Nollywood serves as a vital instrument for cultural and heritage preservation, transcending traditional methods such as folklore and oral history by leveraging storytelling to address societal issues from ancient times, thereby ensuring contemporary cultural continuity. Nonetheless, gaps in the literature highlight the need for deeper examination of Nollywood's challenges, particularly censorship, financial constraints, and the underutilisation of its potential as an educational and cultural medium. For instance, Haynes (2016) acknowledges Nollywood's role in reflecting social realities but gives limited attention to how censorship shapes narrative choices, while Adejunmobi (2002) notes its global cultural influence yet underexplores its pedagogical potential—underscoring the need for more focused inquiry in these areas.

Through an analysis of primary sources, including polls, interviews, and questionnaires, as well as selected films, and secondary sources such as relevant cultural heritage academic texts, papers, and legislation, this study elucidates the role of Nollywood in Nigerian heritage preservation. It highlights thematic concerns such as taboos, metaphors, and poetic justice, drawing connections to historical elements like the veneration of Ogun, the god of iron and justice (Peel, 1997, p. 263). By situating Nollywood within a broader cultural and historical framework—shaped by Nigeria's ethnic diversity, colonial legacies, and contemporary debates on Afrocentrism, decolonisation, and globalisation—this research contributes to heritage studies by examining how the industry, as a powerful cultural force, navigates the tension between preserving indigenous traditions and addressing present-day social realities. In this way, Nollywood is positioned not as an unqualified cultural triumph but as a contested site where heritage, identity, and societal change intersect, connecting us to our cultural roots.

Problem Statement

The research will employ an interdisciplinary approach, integrating heritage studies and, to some extent, film studies, to critically examine the cultural role of Nollywood. This study will address key academic challenges, including the lack of comprehensive frameworks for understanding Nollywood's intersection with heritage preservation, the limited analysis of its potential in safeguarding Nigeria's intangible cultural heritage, and the complexities of globalisation's impact on cultural integrity. The research will investigate how Nollywood navigates the tensions between globalisation and cultural authenticity, using both qualitative and quantitative methods, including interviews with Nollywood practitioners and film analysis. It will also examine the industry's ability to preserve cultural heritage while addressing Nigeria's contemporary social and moral dilemmas, as noted by Azenabor (2022).

Existing scholarship on Nollywood's cultural significance, such as Adejunmobi's (2002) work on language and cultural identity in film and McCain's (2013) research on heritage representation, has explored its potential within heritage studies; however, critical issues remain underexplored. This project will address these issues. Some earlier-mentioned theories of Afrocentricity and decolonisation, particularly those of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Molefi Kete Asante, emphasise the importance of reclaiming African narratives and resisting cultural erasure. Although Nollywood's engagement with indigenous storytelling forms allows it to function both as a historical archive and as a dynamic expression of Nigeria's intangible heritage, challenges related to fragmented distribution networks, weak intellectual property laws, and the tension between commercial imperatives and cultural authenticity persist, limiting Nollywood's full potential within heritage studies (Uwadiegwu et al., 2024). Moreover, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to advanced filmmaking technology—

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such as high-quality cameras (See Figure 1), AI-powered tools, and other essential equipment—and the prevalence of piracy further hinder the industry's role as a cultural institution (Aduku, 2018; Uzo, Mair, & Adewusi, 2023).

Figure 1: Movie shooting in Nollywood using a low-budget camera (Bright, 2019, online**).**

These concerns highlight a critical gap in heritage studies—understanding how Nollywood can effectively overcome these systemic barriers to contribute to the preservation of Nigeria's heritage. Drawing on the main theories of cultural memory, decolonisation, Afrocentricity, and other related concepts, this research explores how Nollywood's narratives function as dynamic tools for fostering cultural pride by addressing historical and contemporary societal challenges and serving as a vehicle for national rebirth (Akinola, 2013).

While Nollywood's role in promoting national identity and cultural heritage is well-documented, there has been an insufficient exploration of how its film production practices intersect with issues of cultural preservation and authenticity (Abodunrin and Akinola, 2019). Therefore, a significant academic problem lies in the underexplored relationship between Nollywood's film production practices and their contribution to heritage studies. Previous scholarship has insufficiently addressed how Nollywood's narrative structures engage with globalised culture and indigenous heritage preservation. This study addresses that gap by asking: To what extent has Nollywood storytelling contributed to Nigeria's heritage? Enquiring how Nollywood's production practices and narrative structures serve as a powerful medium through which Nigerian cultural heritage is simultaneously reflected, preserved, and reshaped within a globalised context.

Shaka (2004) has persuasively demonstrated that Nollywood genres are deeply rooted in the socio-historical crises of Nigerian society, from ritual-killing narratives in the 1990s to crime films and later epics, thereby embedding cultural anxieties and heritage practices into the production itself. His argument highlights the importance of examining production practices as cultural interventions, rather than merely as market-driven choices. Haynes (2016) similarly situates Nollywood as a mirror of Nigerian realities and cultural diversity, while Adejunmobi (2002) highlights the industry's negotiation of linguistic and cultural identity. Ugochukwu (2018) emphasises its role in sustaining Igbo heritage, and Onuzulike (2009) frames Nollywood as a hybrid cultural and technological form, shaped by both indigenous traditions and global flows. In the diaspora context, Krings and Okome (2013) show how Nollywood facilitates cultural belonging and identity maintenance across borders.

However, as these critics collectively suggest, Nollywood has been analysed primarily as a cultural text or a site of identity formation; less attention has been paid to how production practices themselves — the choice of genres, the embedding of oral traditions, or the structuring of narratives — operate as mechanisms of cultural preservation and authenticity. It is precisely this intersection that this thesis seeks to investigate. At the same time, debates over the very label Nollywood highlight the contested nature of cultural identity: while critics like Adenugba (2007) and Shaka (2004) view it as a reductive, neo-colonial imposition, others, such as Haynes (2005), accept it as a pragmatic shorthand for Nigeria's diverse film culture.

This study will therefore explore how Nollywood can bridge these tensions by consciously leveraging oral literature and traditional storytelling elements, such as proverbs, legends, and myths, to tackle contemporary issues, reinforcing its role as a cultural institution. It will also underline the pressing need for more substantial financial and institutional frameworks and advocate for heritage research that integrates production practices, cultural identity, and globalisation.

As Mamadou Diawara (1996) notes, while Nollywood's oral traditions serve as counter-narratives to colonial historiography, they are increasingly threatened by the disruptive forces of modernity.

Drawing on theories such as cultural appropriation (Kennedy and Makkar, 2020), cultural memory (Assmann, 1992), decolonisation (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986), and Afrocentricity (Asante, 1987), the study seeks to comprehensively understand Nollywood's dual role as a promoter of cultural pride and as a mediator of societal tensions within the Nigerian context. Nollywood's promotion of cultural pride is evident in its preservation and

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promotion of Nigeria's diverse heritage through storytelling, as posited by Afolabi (2022). Equally, it will examine how Nollywood navigates and addresses societal tensions, such as ethnic diversities, tribalism, and gender issues, through its narratives and representations. The findings will propose actionable solutions, such as integrating traditional storytelling elements, establishing stronger financial and institutional frameworks, and advocating for policies supporting intellectual property and cultural sustainability.

Considering these problems, the research will position Nollywood as a global ambassador for Nigerian heritage, ensuring its authenticity amidst the challenges of commercialisation and globalisation, as Akinola (2013) advocates. By addressing these academic gaps, the study will offer practical recommendations for enhancing Nollywood's capacity to serve as a model for cultural preservation, societal transformation, and safeguarding Nigeria's heritage locally and globally.

Research Question

To what extent has Nollywood storytelling contributed to Nigerian heritage?

Main Aim

To examine how Nollywood conveys Nigerian heritage globally while addressing local storytelling challenges, in order to assess its impact on cultural preservation and identity. This main aim, therefore, seeks to clarify both the global dimension (how Nigerian heritage is projected internationally) and the local dimension (how Nollywood addresses storytelling challenges within its own context).

Aims and Objectives

Aim 1

To highlight how Nollywood narratives resonate with diverse audiences, in order to evaluate their influence on perceptions of Nigerian culture and their contribution to cross-cultural dialogues.

- **Objective 1a**: Assess audience reception, reviews, and international screenings to show how Nollywood shapes global cultural perceptions.

Aim 2

To address the research gap on intangible heritage within the Nigerian context, in order to provide evidence-based insights for scholars, policymakers, and media practitioners.

- **Objective 2a**: Analyse Nollywood's representation of intangible heritage such as rituals, oral traditions, and language.

Aim 3

To identify the challenges facing Nollywood, including financial constraints, ethical concerns, and inadequate institutional support, in order to propose strategies for overcoming these barriers.

- **Objective 3a**: Evaluate the impact of financial and global challenges on Nollywood's ability to preserve heritage.

- **Objective 3b**: Propose interventions to enhance the industry's sustainability and effectiveness.

Aim 4

To examine the role of Nollywood in transferring cultural memory, in order to demonstrate its contribution to addressing societal issues and preserving collective identity.

- **Objective 4a**: Assess the cultural significance of films such as *Things Fall Apart* (1987), *Iyore* (2015), and *Amina* (2021).
- **Objective 4b**: Critically analyse Nollywood's evolution, focusing on its societal values, didactic themes, and role in addressing social issues.

This study aims to achieve the key objectives above by critically examining Nollywood's role in promoting Nigerian heritage and cultural preservation in the face of financial constraints and global challenges. It assesses how these limitations impact the industry's ability to sustain cultural narratives, while placing a significant emphasis on the quality of Nollywood storytelling. The research explores how Nollywood, through its representative films such as *Things Fall Apart* (1987), Iyore (2015), and *Amina* (2021), preserves Nigeria's intangible heritage, including rituals, oral traditions, and language, while also engaging with societal values, didactic themes, and social issues.

Furthermore, the study examines the evolution of the industry, taking into account both its local storytelling challenges and its representation of Nigerian culture on a global stage. The relationship between the study's aims, objectives, and contributions is further summarised and visualised in the illustration below (See Figure 2). The research highlights how Nollywood, with its potential to dismantle cultural barriers and foster cross-cultural understanding, can significantly enhance its sustainability and effectiveness as a platform for cultural preservation. This potential highlights Nollywood's global influence and its role in fostering cultural exchange. Overall, the study offers valuable insights into Nollywood's contributions to

sustaining Nigerian heritage, shaping cultural identity, and achieving broader international recognition, without drawing absolute conclusions, thereby providing evidence-based perspectives for scholars, policymakers, and media practitioners.

Aims	Objectives	Key focus/contibution
Highlight Nollywood narratives'resonance with diverse audience	Access audience reception, reviews, and international screenings	Evaluate how Nollywood shapes global perseptions of Nigerian culture and fosters cross-cultural dialogue
Address intangable heritage gaps in Nigerain context	Analyse representetion of rituals, oral traditions and language	Explore preservation of Nigeria's intangable heritage through storytelling
Identify challenges facing Nollywood	Evaluate finacial,ethical, and institutional barriers	Understand limitations on heritage preservation and storytelling capacity
Examine Nollywood's role in transferring cultural memory	Access cultural significance of films (*Things Fall Apart, Iyore, Amina) and analyse industry evolution*	Demonstarte engegement with societal values,didactic themes, an social issues and trace development of Nollywood in relations to cultural identity and global recognition

Figure 2: Flowchart linking research aims, objectives, and contributions of Nollywood to heritage preservation (Author's work, 2025).

Overview

Introduction: This section positions Nollywood as a vital cultural institution, underscoring its profound significance. It traces the industry's historical evolution and highlights its unique role in preserving Nigerian intangible heritage, a central concern of this research. It also defines the study's aims, objectives, and research question, focusing on how Nollywood narratives embody and propagate Nigerian cultural values while navigating systemic challenges, including piracy, limited funding, and an evolving digital landscape.

Chapter One: This chapter offers a critical literature review, establishing the theoretical and contextual foundations of the research. It examines academic texts and works on Nigerian oral literature, situating heritage discourse within broader discussions on cultural heritage, Afrocentrism, decolonisation, and postcolonial narratives, among related concepts. The chapter critically engages with seminal and recent works on Nigerian oral storytelling traditions and heritage by employing theoretical frameworks such as Afrocentricity, decolonisation, and cultural appropriation.

Chapter Two: The study's methodological framework focuses on qualitative methodology, blending qualitative and quantitative approaches to achieve a comprehensive cultural inquiry, a hallmark of this research. Data collection methods primarily included in-depth interviews with Nollywood practitioners, surveys and polls, as well as film analyses and the use of existing literature, all underpinned by a manual coding process. This triangulated methodology was further strengthened through a detailed review and analysis of films.

Chapter Three: This chapter examines Nollywood films as a medium for heritage representation through thematic, narrative, content, and visual analysis. Selected films such as

Things Fall Apart (1987) and *Amina* (2021) are reviewed and analysed. These films were chosen for their significant contributions to portraying Nigerian heritage in Nollywood. The analysis reveals how they reflect Nigerian heritage through narrative techniques, symbolism, and cultural themes. The chapter highlights Nollywood's role in fostering connections to cultural memory, preserving heritage, and challenging stereotypes while promoting cultural pride and navigating commercial and global pressures.

Chapter Four: This chapter synthesises findings derived from stakeholders and audience perspectives, integrating data from interviews, audience polls, and patterns and thematic analyses. Key themes and patterns identified include Nollywood's contributions to cultural preservation and heritage, its innovative adaptation of oral traditions, and its struggles with financial constraints and piracy. The chapter underscores how stakeholders perceive Nollywood as a cultural ambassador and a powerful force driving heritage preservation and social transformation despite systemic barriers limiting its potential.

Chapter Five: This chapter focuses on the financing of Nollywood, with a particular emphasis on the role of the Bank of Industry (BOI) in promoting cultural sustainability. It evaluates BOI initiatives such as the NollyFund and the Creative Industry Financing Initiative (CIFI), which aim to bridge funding gaps, improve production quality, and enhance global competitiveness. However, challenges such as bureaucratic hurdles and limited awareness of financial opportunities are identified, underscoring the need for institutional support and stakeholder engagement reforms.

Chapter Six: The final chapter addresses limitations, recommendations, and conclusions, paving the way towards a sustainable future for Nollywood and Nigerian heritage discourse. It acknowledges constraints such as restricted access to key stakeholders and the

industry's dynamic nature. Actionable recommendations include reforming financial structures, strengthening intellectual property laws, and enhancing policy support. The conclusion synthesises the study's findings about its aims and objectives, reaffirming Nollywood's essential role in cultural preservation. It advocates for collaborative strategies to ensure the industry's sustainability and global resonance while enumerating contributions to knowledge, potential future research areas, and final reflections.

Nigerian Heritage

Nigeria's Cultural Heritage and Its Main Ethnic Cultures

Nigeria has a very diverse cultural heritage, a tapestry woven with unique traditions, languages, music, arts, and cuisine. As Aja Nnana Lekwa noted, culture curates a location's ways of life and legacy, shaping collective identity and historical continuity. Nollywood has significantly contributed to this diversity, transforming artistry into relatable experiences. Nigeria's heritage is influenced by over 250 ethnic groups (Okpanachi and Odikpa, 2023, p. 2), each with unique customs, languages, and traditions. The three largest ethnic groups are the Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa-Fulani. Other influential ethnic groups include, but are not limited to, the Edo, Ijaw, Kanuri, Ibibio, and Tiv. The Edo in the south are renowned for their rich culture, rivalling Nigeria's three largest ethnic groups (Stewart, 2000, p. 1-10). Their influence persists in traditional and contemporary art and music (Emelife, A., 2023, p.16). This enduring legacy reflects their historical significance and continued contributions to Nigeria's cultural landscape.

Having postulated Nollywood as a means of showcasing Nigerian heritage, it is essential to understand what our heritage encompasses, i.e., to examine it along the lines of

tangible and intangible heritage. Among Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups, the Hausa-Fulani stand out as the largest, with a population that mirrors the unique cultural and historical integration of these two distinct groups. While the Hausa and Fulani have historically maintained separate identities, their shared traditions, cultural synthesis, and widespread Islamic influence have led to their collective identification as the Hausa-Fulani. This unique cultural blend plays a pivotal role in shaping Nigeria's cultural landscape (Osuntokun and Olukoju, 1997, p. 112).

The cultural fabric of the Hausa-Fulani is emblematic of a dynamic confluence of indigenous customs and external influences, particularly Islamic, which have profoundly shaped their social, spiritual, and artistic expressions. Central to this heritage is a rich pre-Islamic past, where the spiritual and social realms were inextricably linked. As Iliya (2024, pp. 30-37) notes, the Hausa people once revered a supreme deity, Ubangiji, who was perceived as the ultimate creator and overseer, in addition to numerous lesser gods and spirits associated with natural forces such as wind, water, and fertility. Among these, the goddess Daurama, representing water and fertility, held particular prominence. Ancestor worship also played a significant role in the spiritual life of the Hausa, with rituals designed to maintain a connection between the living and their forebears (Dzukogi, 2024, pp. 333-335).

The Bori cult, a cornerstone of pre-Islamic Hausa spirituality, is a testament to the resilience of the Hausa-Fulani culture. It revolved around the belief in spirits inhabiting natural objects. The Bori spirits were integral to trance rituals, which were not only spiritual practices but also social events that reflected the organisation of Hausa society. Besmer's (1983, pp. 56-78) analysis of the Bori cult illuminates how these rituals provided a space for social expression and redefinition, particularly for women, who could use trance possession to alter their societal

roles. Through these rituals, the Hausa reaffirmed their spiritual and social structures. At the same time, the craft traditions such as leatherwork, weaving, and metalwork also took on profound ritual and symbolic importance, reflecting the culture's intertwining of functionality, spirituality, and identity.

The arrival of Islam in the Hausa-Fulani region marked a significant turning point in their cultural evolution. Islam brought new forms of literacy, art, and social organisation. Arabic literacy, in particular, enabled the preservation of historical narratives, poetry, and religious texts, recorded both in Arabic and Ajami (the Hausa language written in Arabic script), which enriched the region's intellectual and literary traditions (Adeleke, 2014, p. 326). The profound impact of Islam is evident in architecture, where Islamic design principles blended with indigenous traditions, resulting in the distinctive mud-brick mosques and palaces found in cities like Kano and Zaria, which symbolise the fusion of external religious influences with local aesthetics (Adamo, 2011, pp. 1-15).

Music and dance, integral elements of Hausa-Fulani identity, also adapted to these changes, retaining their vibrancy while incorporating Islamic themes. The kakaki (See Figure 3), a long metal trumpet associated with royalty, symbolises this cultural continuity. Used in ceremonial contexts to honour rulers and mark significant events, the kakaki underscores the enduring importance of music in Hausa-Fulani culture. Instruments like the kakaki and the talking drum continue to play a prominent role in preserving and performing Hausa-Fulani traditions, embodying historical continuity and cultural adaptability (Gourlay, 1982, pp. 48-72).

Figure 3: Kakaki at play by courtiers during a celebration (Ajayi, 2023).

In contemporary Nigeria, Hausa-Fulani culture thrives through its portrayal in Nigerian cinema. This medium highlights the region's cultural heritage, including music, dance, traditional attire, and architectural motifs. Nollywood films that merge historical narratives with modern creativity preserve and celebrate the Hausa-Fulani legacy and other tribes, fostering national and international appreciation for their rich cultural traditions (Abdulsalam, 2023, p. 3).

Ultimately, the cultural traditions of the Hausa-Fulani are not just relics of the past; they are living legacies that continue to shape Nigeria's national identity. From the spiritual practices of their pre-Islamic ancestors to the enduring influence of Islam and the vibrant presence of Hausa-Fulani culture in modern media, this ethnic group exemplifies the dynamic

interplay between tradition and innovation. The cultural wealth of the Hausa-Fulani underscores the significance of preserving such traditions as an integral part of Nigeria's diverse national heritage (Onyima, 2016, pp. 273-292).

The Igbo tribe of Eastern Nigeria significantly contributes to Nigeria's heritage through its unique tonal language, rich oral tradition, and a wealth of proverbs, folktales, myths, and legends, often showcased in Nollywood movies. These elements are central to the Igbo identity. The tribe's wisdom is reflected in its language, traditions, community values, and organised social structures, like the 'age-grade' system (Onah et al., 2024, pp. 31-39). This wisdom, rooted in the Igbo worldview, emphasises communal living, respect for elders, and collective responsibility. Traditional Igbo society is organised around kinship ties, where individualism is mostly absent. The culture emphasises the importance of lineage and clan systems in social structure and governance, with additional institutions like age-grade systems, secret societies, and village councils fostering community cohesion and governance (Esekpa and Ufumaka, 2022, pp. 32–39).

These systems ensure that knowledge is transmitted through personal interactions, mentorship, and communal decision-making, fostering a culture of shared wisdom and moral guidance. The Igbo people proudly showcase their religion and spirituality at every opportunity, from naming children to celebrating the New Year festival. Traditional Igbo religion, like most African spiritual systems, revolves around belief in a supreme deity, Chukwu or Chineke, and various lesser gods and spirits. Rituals, ceremonies, and sacrifices play a significant role in Igbo spiritual practices to maintain harmony with the spirit world (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013, pp. 41–53). In terms of art and architecture, Igbo art heritage is characterised by intricate designs, patterns, and motifs, often found in wood carvings,

sculptures, masks, and textiles. Igbo architecture includes traditional compounds, village squares, and healing shrines, reflecting communal living and spiritual beliefs, a common feature of Nigerian heritage (Kanu, 2022, pp. 187–206). It is encouraging to see modern Nigerian heritage practices utilising Igbo-inspired designs, especially in contemporary architecture that tells a story about the past. These designs can be seen on house gates with lions, clay-coloured house domes, and sculptural works dotting compounds and interiors.

The Igbos are inherently musical, so dance is integral to their culture and is used to celebrate festivals, ceremonies, and social gatherings. Traditional Igbo music features instruments such as the udu (clay pot drum), ogene (metal gong), and ekwe (wooden slit drum). Dance styles like the Ikpirikpi Ogu and Agaba showcase energetic movements and rhythmic patterns. Another interesting aspect of Igbo heritage practices is their rich culinary tradition, characterised by its diversity and reliance on locally sourced ingredients. Staple foods include yams, cassava, plantains, and vegetables, often prepared in dishes like ji mmanu (yam and palm oil), ofe nsala (white soup), and uke (breadfruit porridge), which have become a tourist attraction for Nigerian food tourism (Nwokorie, 2015, pp. 1–6). The Igbo people have proven, much like the Benin Kingdom (Bradbury and Morton-Williams, 2018, p. 61), a high level of organisation and cultural richness before colonialism and the formation of Nigeria, exemplifying the depth of African heritage.

Masquerades and festivals (See Figure 4) are also crucial to Igbo cultural festivals and ceremonies, representing ancestral spirits and deities with colourful costumes showcasing their tangible heritage. Festivals like the Iri Ji Ohu (New Yam Festival), Mmanwu (Masquerade Festival), and Iwa Ji (Cocoa Yam Festival) are celebrated with music, dance, rituals, and feasting in a convivial African atmosphere.

Figure 4: A colourful group of Igbo Masquerades during a festival (Ologo, 2024).

Like the wider Nigerian heritage, Igbo heritage is a vibrant and dynamic cultural legacy that continues to evolve and adapt in the modern world, maintaining a strong sense of identity and pride among Igbo people worldwide. In addition to Igbo culture, the Edo people, also

known as the Bini or Benin people (Bradbury, 2017, p. 18), boast a rich, famous, and diverse cultural heritage encompassing various aspects of their history, traditions, language, art, and customs. While this heritage has been extensively documented in history books and, to some extent, in Nigerian films, key aspects of the Edo heritage are outlined below:

The Edo people are renowned for the ancient Benin Kingdom, one of the oldest and most powerful kingdoms in West Africa (Uzzi, Siyanbola, and Omoruan, 2021, pp. 94-106). Dating back to the 11th century, the kingdom flourished as a centre for trade, art, and governance. It was famous for its highly organised political system, skilled artisans, and impressive architectural achievements, such as the walls of Benin, which were among the most significant artificial structures in the world (Forde and Kaberry, 2018, pp. 22–24). The Edo language, also known as Bini, is spoken by the Edo people and serves as a vehicle for preserving their cultural heritage. Edo literature includes oral traditions, folktales, proverbs, and songs that convey moral lessons, as well as historical narratives and cultural values passed down through generations.

Edo art is renowned for its exquisite craftsmanship and aesthetic beauty. Traditional Edo art forms include bronze casting, wood carving, ivory carving, and textile weaving (Gore, 2019, p. 179). These artistic expressions are deeply embedded with symbolic meanings, profoundly reflecting the Edo people's spiritual, social, and cultural ideologies within the broader context of Nigeria's rich culture, and serve as enduring symbols of power, strength, and authority. They embody a legacy of resilience, bravery, and a proud warrior tradition, encapsulating not only the historical narrative of the Edo people but also their significant contribution to Nigeria's cultural identity and national heritage (See Figure 5). Like several other tribes in Nigeria, the traditional religion of the Edo people greatly reflects Nigerian

intangible heritage; it revolves around the worship of various deities and ancestral spirits. The Oba (king) serves as the spiritual and political leader of the kingdom, with divine authority. Rituals, ceremonies, and festivals are central to Edo religious practices, celebrating gods, ancestors, and important milestones. Traditional practices can be seen in marriage, naming, and initiation rites (Welton, 1969, pp. 59–77), reinforcing social cohesion and identity. Dance and music are integral to Edo cultural celebrations, using traditional instruments like drums, flutes, and xylophones to accompany dances that express joy, gratitude, and reverence during celebrations and ancestral worship.

Figure 5: The Benin Bronzes, symbolising power and warrior tradition (The Open University, 2024).

Overall, Edo heritage is a testament to the resilience, creativity, and ingenuity of the Edo people, who continue to cherish and celebrate their cultural identity amidst modernisation and globalisation. The Edo people maintain a solid connection to their ancestral roots and heritage through their language, art, religion, and traditions (Welton,1969, pp. 59-77).

Although numerous ethnic groups exist across Nigeria, including the Urhobo, Igarra, Igala and Ebira, some of the most notable and defining elements of Nigerian intangible

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heritage, are found among the Yoruba people. One such tradition is Ifa, also known as the Ifa corpus or the Orunmila tradition—a sophisticated system of divination and religious practice originating from the Yoruba people of Nigeria and Benin. As one of Africa's oldest and most intricate divination systems, Ifa dates back thousands of years. Yoruba spirituality, particularly Ifa, has gained momentum in recent years in the diaspora, with historical roots traceable to the era of enslavement, as seen in syncretic religions such as Santería in Cuba, Orisha worship in Trinidad, and Candomblé in Brazil (Capone, 2005). Scholars such as Olupona and Rey (2007) argue that Yoruba religion now deserves recognition as a world religion due to its widespread diffusion and large number of adherents, while Capone (2005) further observes that its presence is gradually increasing in Europe, indicating a significant global trend in the recognition of Yoruba religion.

In ways closely related to Capone's (2005; 2010) discussion of the fluidity and global reconfiguration of African-derived religions, Bettina Schmidt's scholarship offers an analytically grounded account of how these traditions adapt within distinct diasporic and urban contexts, highlighting the importance of social and cultural influences. In her investigation of Caribbean religions in New York, Schmidt (2008) documents how Santería, Vodou and Shango are reinterpreted and reorganised by migrant communities navigating multicultural and socio-economic pressures. Her later research in São Paulo (Schmidt, 2016) extends this analytical perspective by examining trance, spirit possession, embodiment, and ritual experience within Afro-Brazilian and related traditions, including Candomblé, Umbanda, and spiritist practices. Her position as a scholarly observer, rather than a participant observer, enables her to show how religious experiences are shaped by local social dynamics,

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interpretive frameworks, and everyday conditions, rather than being treated as fixed inheritances.

This analytical stance resonates with Capone's findings that African-derived traditions, particularly in Brazil, are constituted through ongoing negotiation, reinterpretation and claims to authority rather than static transmission (Capone, 2010). Read together, Schmidt's and Capone's analyses reinforce the broader scholarly view that the persistence and global diffusion of African-derived religions depend on continuous adaptation and creative re-expression across diverse social environments.

In returning to the Ifa discourse, it is important to situate its central beliefs and practices, which form the foundation of Yoruba divination and spiritual life.

At the core of Ifa is the belief in Orunmila, the deity of wisdom, knowledge, and divination. Orunmila is said to have received the knowledge of Ifa from Olodumare, the supreme deity, and serves as an intermediary between humans and the spiritual realm. Ifa divination is conducted by a trained priest or priestess known as a Babalawo or Iyanifa. During a divination session (See Figure 6), the priest or priestess utilises a divination tray, called an Opon Ifa in Yoruba, along with a set of divination tools—either a divining chain or palm nuts—to communicate with the Orishas (deities) and interpret messages from the spiritual world.

The Ifa corpus consists of an extensive body of oral literature known as Odu Ifa, which comprises 256 chapters (Odus). Each Odu contains verses and proverbs that have been transmitted through generations. These Odus are structured into 16 principal categories, known as Odu merindinlogun, which form the foundation for divinatory interpretations. Each Odu

provides insight into various aspects of life, including health, relationships, career, and spirituality.

Beyond its function as a divination system, Ifa serves as a comprehensive philosophical and ethical framework, guiding individuals toward a balanced and harmonious life. It emphasises personal integrity, moral conduct, community cohesion, and the cultivation of wisdom, knowledge, and spiritual growth (Ogunleye, 2019, pp. 68–77).

Throughout its long history, Ifa has remained a central aspect of Yoruba culture and spirituality, influencing various aspects of life, including rituals, ceremonies, art, music, and literature. In recent years, Ifa has also gained recognition and interest beyond West Africa, as people worldwide, especially in Brazil, the Caribbean, and New Orleans in the United States, seek to learn from its ancient wisdom and spiritual teachings. Ifa, despite not being written in any holy book such as the Bible or the Qoran, lives in the hearts of its practitioners as an embodiment of several unwritten verses of wisdom and Yoruba philosophies. According to Awoniyi (2015, p. 6), ''Ifa emphasises good character, which is much cherished in the Yoruba philosophies with the saying in the Yoruba language that 'O ba lowo ko ju sekere lo, Iwa re ni kan' meaning 'You may be richer than a rattle, but good character is more important'.''

Figure 6: A Babalawo acting as Orunmila performing an Ifa divination for diaspora Ifa pilgrims in a personal divination space during the World Ifa Festival in Osogbo, Nigeria (Ifakayode, 2025, personal collection).

Nigeria's National Culture

Building on this exploration of Nigeria's ethnic diversity, modern national culture presents another dynamic aspect of the country's heritage, which is well-documented in Nigerian films. Contemporary Nigerian heritage revolves around music, dance, and sports, particularly football. Nigerian music is vibrant and diverse, ranging from traditional folk tunes to contemporary genres like Afrobeat, Highlife, Juju, and Fuji. Renowned Nigerian musicians, such as Fela Kuti, King Sunny Ade, and more recently, Wizkid, Davido, Tems, Yemi Alade, Burna Boy, and co., have gained international acclaim by selling out international event centres

and earning Grammy nominations and wins. Traditional dances like the Bata dance, Ekombi, and Masquerade dances are now being incorporated into Nigerian contemporary music and dance as an integral part of Nigerian culture that cannot be overlooked.

Beyond individual creativity and performances, institutional and governmental support play a vital role in sustaining Nigeria's cultural life. While efforts by the Lagos State government to promote heritage through theatre construction and music concerts are commendable—for example, Lagos can leverage its substantial state revenue to fund large-scale cultural initiatives, such as sponsoring over 143 festivals and events with approximately £4.2 million (Vanguard,2025) —other states may struggle financially to support their own heritage sites. Ekiti State, for instance, is relatively less wealthy but is home to the nationally significant Ikogosi Warm Springs, which has experienced periods of neglect due to insufficient funding and poor management (Fayemi,2018).

These disparities highlight the need for a coordinated national framework, provided through the National Commission for Museums and Monuments Act (1990). Under this legislation, the federal government holds exclusive authority to designate, protect, and fund sites of national importance, whereas states primarily manage local heritage initiatives. The Act empowers the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) to administer national museums, antiquities, and monuments, and to establish and maintain a fund for promoting its objectives. It also grants the power to acquire and dispose of any interests in land or other property for cultural preservation. In practice, this means federal intervention can provide the financial and institutional capacity needed to restore neglected sites, maintain

existing ones, and promote them nationally and internationally—helping less wealthy states safeguard their cultural assets.

In this way, federal support through funding, national programs, and cross-state initiatives can therefore help reduce regional disparities, ensure equitable development of Nigeria's cultural heritage, and safeguard it for future generations.

Nigeria has a rich artistic and craft tradition encompassing pottery, weaving, sculpture, and beadwork. Traditional Nigerian art integrates motifs and symbols that reflect the cultural beliefs and histories of its diverse ethnic groups. Beyond the popular Igbo dishes mentioned earlier, Nigerian cuisine offers a varied and flavorful array of meals distinguished by various spices, herbs, and cooking techniques. Staple foods such as rice, yams, cassava, plantains, and beans are commonly paired with soups or stews featuring ingredients like palm oil, tomatoes, and peppers. Notable dishes include Jollof rice, pounded yam with egusi soup, suya (grilled meat skewers), and moi moi (steamed bean pudding). While Nigeria lacks an official national dish, reaching a consensus is challenging due to its tribal diversity. Nonetheless, Nigerian cuisine represents a shared cultural heritage, which we celebrate and promote through Nollywood and tourism initiatives.

The branding of Nigeria's football teams embodies national pride and resilience. The country's most prominent football team, the male senior squad, is known as the Super Eagles. In contrast, the female senior team, the Super Falcons, is Africa's most successful, having secured the Women's Africa Cup of Nations 10 times (Wiseman, 2015, p. 29). Nigeria's youth teams follow a naming convention aligned with the eagle, a national symbol featured in the coat of arms (See Figure 7), underscoring strength and heritage (Lawrence, Akintaro and

Abiodun, 2019, p. 301). These include the Flying Eagles (U21), the Eagles or Dream Team (Olympic team, U23), and the Golden Eaglets (U17), the latter holding a record five FIFA U17 World Cup titles. This thematic connection to the eagle reflects Nigeria's sporting heritage and broader national identity discourse, illustrating how symbols and nomenclature foster unity, pride, and belonging.

Nigeria's moniker, the 'Giant of Africa,' carries an inherent responsibility on the continent, though maintaining this stature has been challenging. The Nigerian Football Supporters Club (NFSC) exemplified efforts to promote the nation's sporting heritage globally by converting support into embodied cultural tradition: through distinctive chants, colourful regalia, larger-than-life calabashes, indigenous drum set displays, and unique Nigerian urban folk songs at match venues, with over 100,000 members (Nigeria Football Supporters Club, n.d.). Such practices reflect how sport can serve as a cultural heritage more broadly, as discussed in the literature on sport, identity, and performative traditions (Bairner, 2001; Giulianotti and Robertson, 2007; Guschwan, 2016). NFSC operates international chapters in the United States, Australia, India, South Africa and Côte d'Ivoire (Herald, 2023; Nigeria Football Supporters Club, n.d.), projecting Nigerian heritage at away matches and tournaments abroad through mobilised fan contingents. By staging these performative traditions beyond Nigerian soil, NFSC transforms sport into a living archive of culture and identity. Government agencies and private heritage practitioners can draw valuable lessons from their dedication.

Figure 7: Nigeria's Coat of Arms. (Aluwong, 2019, online).

Religion in Nigeria is diverse, with Christianity and Islam as the two dominant faiths. However, these are alien traditions that do not fully reflect Nigerian heritage. Traditional African religions, still practised alongside Christianity and Islam, remain central to understanding the country's spiritual identity. Crucially, the global faiths have not operated in isolation but have been reshaped through contact with indigenous traditions. Esoh (2023, pp. 1–3) applies missio-cultural theory to show how missions adapt to cultural contexts by

translating religious ideas into local frameworks and embedding them within social, historical, and linguistic realities. He further demonstrates that modern Pentecostalism has absorbed symbols from African traditional religion, such as church wristbands functioning as neo-amulets and protective objects—practices rooted in longstanding African spiritual traditions.

Nigerian heritage is also displayed through festivals and celebrations. Various festivals and ceremonies are celebrated yearly, each with cultural significance. These festivals often involve music, dance, traditional rituals, and communal feasting. Examples include the Durbar Festival in northern Nigeria, the Osun-Osogbo Festival in Osun State, and the New Yam Festival, celebrated by various ethnic groups. These festivals offer valuable insights that Nollywood directors can use to represent Nigerian heritage in their films more accurately, such as portraying the ceremonial horsemanship, regalia, and hierarchical pageantry of the Durbar festival (Falola, 2001), or the sacred river procession, priestly roles, and ritual offerings associated with the Osun-Osogbo festival (UNESCO, n.d.).

Nigeria has a rich literary tradition, with celebrated authors such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Flora Nwapa, JP Clark, Niyi Osundare, Ben Okri, Biyi Bandele, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie gaining international recognition. Nigerian literature often discusses the country's history, culture, and societal issues. Additionally, oral traditions, including folktales, myths, and proverbs, play a significant role in preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge across generations (Akporherhe and Oghenerioborue, 2021, pp. 56–75). Nigeria's heritage reflects its complex history and diverse population, contributing to its dynamic and colourful cultural landscape.

Nollywood: The Nigerian Film Industry

The Nigerian film industry, commonly known as Nollywood, traces its origin back to the colonial era (Imiti and Anyanwu, 2023, pp. 593–607), and Nigerian cinema flourished in the 1960s. To understand the Nigerian film industry and its relationship with Nigerian heritage, it is essential to explore its historical evolution through three phases: pre-independence Nigerian movies and theatre, post-independence era Nigerian movies and theatre, and the Nollywood era. Nigeria attained independence from British colonial rule on October 1st, 1960. Therefore, using this milestone as a reference point allows for categorising the transition phases of Nigerian theatre and films.

Pre-Independence Nigeria Movie and Theatre

During the pre-independence era, movies and theatre held significant cultural importance in Nigeria, reflecting societal norms, struggles, and aspirations. Nigeria has a rich storytelling tradition through oral forms (Atiku, 2022, pp.23-25), which later transitioned into cinematic and theatrical expressions. One of the earliest notable Nigerian films is *Palaver* (1926) by British Instructional Films, directed by Geoffrey Barkas and featuring Nigerian actors (See Figure 8). It was made in 1926 and is recognised as the first Nigerian feature film wholly shot in Nigeria (Kenneth, 2017, p. 24). It revolves around a Northern Nigerian romance — a clash between a British district officer and a tin miner that led to war. The film has been widely criticised as a eulogy of the white man as the messiah of Africans, an outdated perception inconsistent with modern Nigerian narratives (Akande, 2017, online). This criticism suggests a missed opportunity for a film to authentically portray Nigeria's heritage, culture,

and anti-colonial resistance. However, Nollywood's ongoing efforts are reclaiming these narratives, centring Indigenous perspectives, and challenging colonial portrayals.
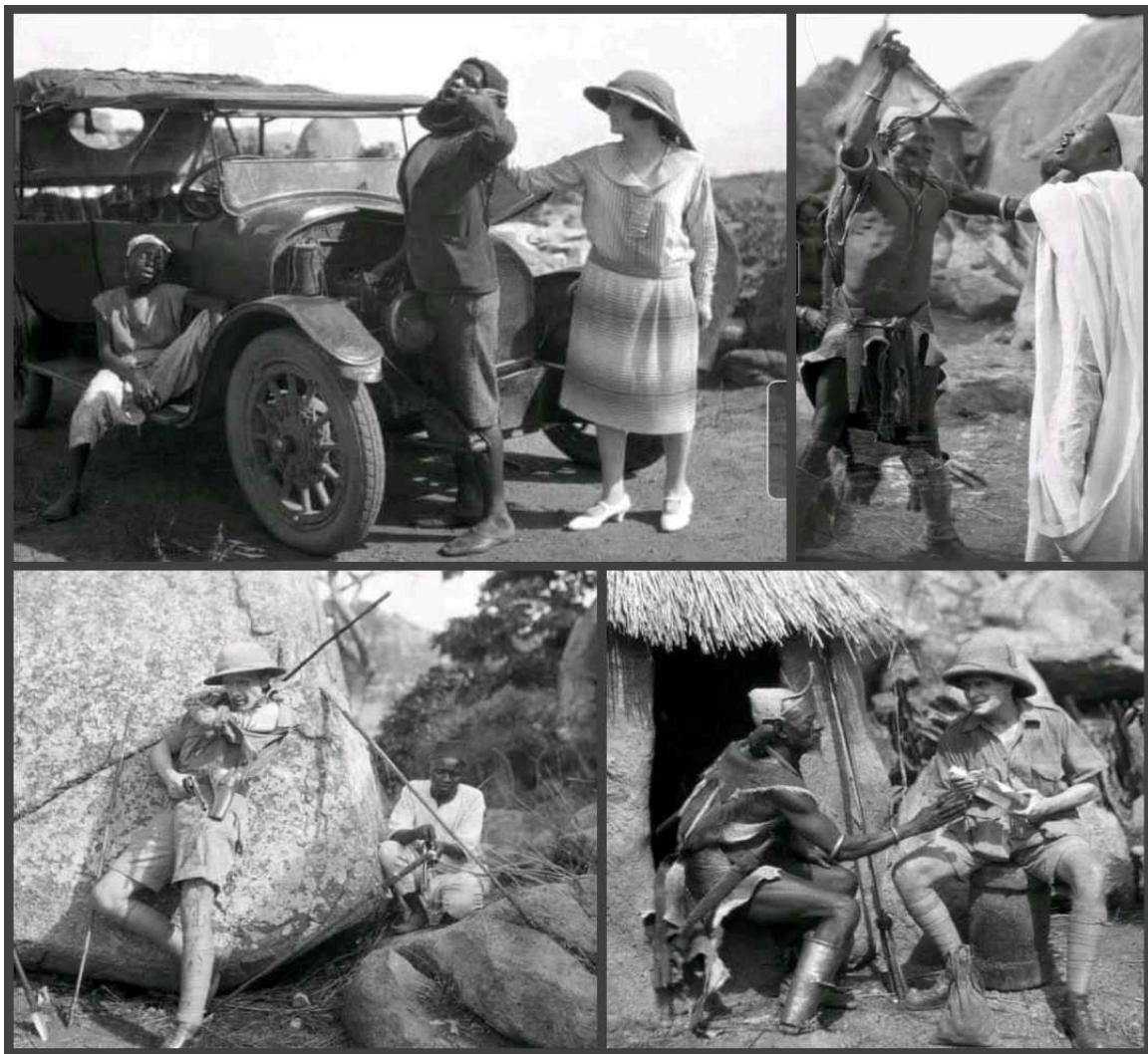
Figure 8: Scenes from Nigeria's first feature film, *Palaver* 1926 (IMDb, 2024, online).

A significant early Nigerian film production was *Fincho* (1957), produced by Sam Zebba and sponsored by Zebba West Africa. While *Palaver*, a film that represents the earliest feature filmed in Nigeria, was made by a colonial author and targeted a foreign-oriented audience, limiting its claim as a genuinely Nigerian production; *Fincho*, in contrast, was the

first film copyrighted to the Nigerian Film Unit and the first to be shot in colour (Anazia, 2016), marking a transitional step toward cinema engaging Nigerian audiences and themes. The film, shot on 16 mm film, had a runtime of 76 minutes and 2,574 feet of footage, with its introduction written by the renowned American singer Harry Belafonte. Its synopsis highlights the tension between colonial powers and the colonised people of Nigeria (Richards, 2005, p. 59): 'An African boy and his girl in a small village in Nigeria, and the impact of westernisation following the arrival of white men' (Colonial Film, 2010, online). *Fincho* responded to European colonialists' vision of industrialising Nigeria, marking the early struggle against colonial dominance and the preservation of African identity and heritage.

Bell (2013, pp. 431–450) cautions against privileging one heritage over another, arguing that historical narratives often risk elevating the dominant perspectives while marginalising others. This is particularly relevant to *Fincho*, which exposed colonial domination and Western influence while highlighting Nigerian resistance and the struggles of local communities. Bell's observation underscores that focusing only on colonial structures can obscure indigenous voices, cultural traditions, and forms of resistance, helping us understand early Nigerian cinema as both a reflection of colonial oppression and a space where Nigerian communities' resilience and cultural identity are asserted and preserved. The flourishing of Yoruba theatre during the same period further demonstrates rich indigenous storytelling traditions that sustained and affirmed Nigerian cultural identity, providing a foundation for both theatre and later cinema. Prominent African writers and filmmakers such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and Tunde Kelani further exemplify this cultural assertion, as their works have not only achieved commercial success but also served as catalysts for cultural and social change from an African perspective.

Paradoxically, despite being a Nigerian film, *Fincho* was produced in America and remains in the custody of the British Film Institute. The Nigerian government's failure to prioritise heritage preservation is a central theme of this study. Cultural heritage management in Nigeria is undermined by weak enforcement of laws and the absence of comprehensive artefact inventories, reflecting systemic inefficiencies (Nomishan, Tubi and Gubam, 2023, pp. 662–684). These challenges are further exacerbated by persistent underfunding and fragile institutional frameworks, severely hindering preservation efforts (Chirikure, Ndoro and Deacon, 2017, pp. 1–21). Collectively, these shortcomings illustrate broader administrative deficiencies that obstruct sustainable heritage management, underscoring the urgent need for strategic reform and greater governmental commitment.

During the pre-independence era, Nigerian theatre was predominantly defined by adaptations of folk opera, distinguished by their intricate and vibrant costumes. These performances represented Nigeria's rich and diverse cultural heritage, encapsulating traditional aesthetics and societal narratives through elaborate visual and performative expressions. These productions featured heavy conventional drumming, music, and folklore (Euba, 2018, pp. 207–241). It employs satire to tell stories about happenings in society, and unlike the current Nollywood, most plays of this era were in the indigenous language, specifically Yoruba. The Yoruba people were the pacesetters of Nigerian theatre, with a solid travelling theatre culture locally known as Alarinjo theatre (Bakare and Barbieri, 2023, pp. 35–51). Notable theatre productions of this period include *Portmanteau Woman* (1952), *Bread and Bullet* (1950) by Hubert Ogunde, *Ife Owo* (*Love of Money)* (1950), and *Igaba Oro (Harvest Period)* (1959) by Kola Ogunmola. Their works often incorporated Yoruba culture and music elements, reflecting their deep cultural resonance.

In this research interview, Bayo Bankole—also known as Boy Alinco—a distinguished Nigerian actor based in the United States, underscored the importance of accurately representing history and acknowledging the contributions of Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups. In particular, he accentuates the role of the Yoruba people, asserting, 'The diversity of Nigeria's cultural tapestry is its strength, and every tribe's story must be told with authenticity and respect.' However, he observes, 'The Yoruba people's unique gift for storytelling has been a cornerstone of Nigeria's cultural and artistic identity, creating narratives that resonate across several generations.' His assertion underscores the pioneering role of Yoruba theatre practitioners in the pre-independence era of Nigerian cinema, whose creative ingenuity and industriousness provided a robust foundation for developing Nigerian theatre. This, in turn, catalysed the evolution of the nation's cinematic landscape, ultimately giving rise to the globally recognised Nollywood industry.

Post-Independence Nigerian Cinema

Post-Independence, Nigerian theatre evolved significantly, blending indigenous traditions with modern influences. While its roots trace back centuries through traditional performances, the early 20th century saw the emergence of modern Nigerian theatre, shaped by European theatrical conventions. Indeed, renowned British actor Janet Suman once asserted that 'theatre is a white invention', a notion that has been challenged by Turkish critics, arguing that theatre transcends national boundaries (Çakirtaş, 2023, p. 555). While it can be argued that the European influence is not a negative phenomenon, it could be seen to deprive Nigerian theatrical performance styles of opportunity from the onset. As Soyinka (1976) and Barber (2000) observe, indigenous Nigerian theatre was embedded in ritual practice, collective participation, and spiritual mediation, whereas European models privileged scripted drama,

fixed proscenium staging, and the valorisation of the individual performer, as Carlson (2011) has noted.

In contrast to African communal traditions, where the boundary between audience and performer was fluid —a point emphasised by Schechner (2002)—this individualist paradigm reconstituted theatre primarily as a spectacle to be observed rather than enacted collectively. Consequently, post-independence Nigerian theatre was compelled to negotiate between ritual-centric traditions and imported dramaturgical frameworks, generating both tensions and innovative hybridities in performance practice, as Banham (2004) argues. These negotiations of performance practice also influenced early Nigerian film, as practitioners from travelling theatre traditions adapted communal and ritual-inspired stage productions into the new medium, bringing their skills, expertise, and narrative strategies to navigate the distinct technical and storytelling demands of film, helping shape what would later become Nollywood (Olayiwola, 2011).

Historically, Nollywood emerged as a platform to narrate Nigerian stories through a distinct cultural perspective and heritage. From its inception, practitioners have grappled with the challenge of preserving this foundational ethos, emphasising the need to remain rooted in the industry's original vision. Hubert Ogunde distinguished himself early by showcasing Nigerian heritage. Recognised as a pioneer of Nigerian theatre (Ezeugo, 2021, pp. 1–4), he founded the Ogunde Theatre Party in the 1940s, producing satires and lampoons. In the 1960s and beyond, he further developed these socially conscious plays, addressing pressing issues of the era—such as colonialism, independence, and governance—with increasing depth.

Nevertheless, Nollywood's relationship to Nigerian heritage has always been more complex and contested. Practitioners navigated competing pressures between popular,

commercial, and sensationalist demands, restricted budgets, and ongoing debates surrounding cultural authenticity. These tensions shaped both the form and the substance of early Nollywood productions, and they became more pronounced during the industry's rapid rise in the 1990s. At this moment, debates within African Third Cinema foregrounded how stylistic and narrative strategies might serve political and social agendas. The movement highlighted the politics of resisting Western cinematic conventions while simultaneously promoting cultural memory and identity, fostering a stronger sense of connection to African heritage.

Ethiopian-American scholar Teshome Gabriel (1982, p.xi, qtd. in Geiger 2017, p.62) argued that African filmmakers had an obligation to produce art forms that advance postcolonial self-determination, embracing 'the twin aspects of filmic experience—namely, style and ideology.'The African Third Cinema framework, often characterised by the idea of 'oppositionality,' underscored the necessity of resisting inherited Western modes of production and consumption while decolonising storytelling frameworks (Geiger 2017, p.62). Although Gabriel did not write directly about Nollywood, his theoretical lens sheds light on the central tensions in its early development, particularly the balance between commercial pressures and cultural authenticity. It highlights how filmmakers navigated inherited colonial structures while simultaneously asserting a distinct Nigerian cinematic voice.

These performances served as platforms for critiquing colonial rule and advocating for independence. Additionally, they celebrated Nigerian culture and traditions, fostering a sense of national pride. As one of the interviewees, John Chizoba Vincent, observed, the movies of this era blend traditional folklore with contemporary issues, making the stories relatable and engaging for a broad audience. One of the defining works of this era was the film *Bisi, Daughter of the River* (1977), featuring London Broadway star Patti Boulaye. This story

evokes the worship and dedication of Yemoja (An African goddess of the Ocean) (Kyles et al., 2020, p. 1), contrasting with the modernity pursued by the protagonist Bisi.

In terms of language and representation, early Nigerian films and theatre productions have always celebrated Nigeria's diverse heritage despite the influence of British colonialism and the English language's hegemony (McCain, 2013, p. 30). Early Nollywood films, for instance, often used English as the dominant language, mirroring colonial educational and social structures. However, these productions also made significant efforts to incorporate indigenous languages and cultural elements, reflecting a deep-seated desire to reclaim and celebrate Nigeria's diverse heritage. This celebration is evident in the code-switching and code-mixing of Nigerian languages such as Yoruba, Igbo, Edo, Hausa, Ibibio, and others with English, and the inclusion of traditional music, dance, and storytelling techniques in productions, which serve as a powerful celebration of Nigeria's rich cultural tapestry (Adejunmobi,2002, pp. 74-103).

The evolution of Nigerian cinema and theatre across the pre- and post-independence eras, despite inherent limitations, established a fundamental narrative framework. Over the decades, these narratives have transformed, shaping the foundation of the country's dynamic contemporary entertainment industry. During this formative period, creative works played an instrumental role in defining Nigerian cultural identity, offering a platform for artistic expression and engaging with societal and political challenges (Omosor, 2020, p. 1–5). The themes and storytelling techniques developed during this time were deeply rooted in the cultural and historical realities of the nation, addressing the struggles for independence and the pursuit of a unified identity.

This legacy continued to influence the trajectory of Nigerian cinema and theatre as they adapted to modern forms of storytelling and technology.The emphasis on blending traditional and contemporary elements persisted, ensuring that the socio-cultural values of early productions remained relevant in contemporary works. Today, Nigerian cinema and theatre continue to draw on this legacy, using it as a framework to navigate and reflect the complexities of modern society while preserving the essence of the nation's heritage. By bridging historical and contemporary themes, these cultural artefacts have profoundly shaped Nigeria's collective socio-cultural consciousness and its global creative identity.

Nollywood Era

The themes and influences of post-independence Nigerian movies and theatre often addressed issues related to colonialism, nationalism, cultural identity, and social concerns (Bala, 2019, pp. 1–12). Considering the country's emergence from British colonialism, this is expected, hence the quest for rebirth and national identity. Having established how the industry began and the term 'Nollywood' was popularised, it is essential to note that it was not until the 1990s that what we now call Nollywood began to shape up. Modern Nigerian filmmaking, driven by new technology and contemporary storytelling, started in 1992 with the rise of 'home video' entertainment. Equally Epic films, rooted in cultural narratives, remain popular today. The first straight-to-video film without a cinema release was *Living in Bondage* (1992), directed by Chris Rapu and written by Kenneth Nnebue (Okome, 2017, pp. 152–160). The movie, which is split into two parts and runs for 163 minutes, features notable stars such as Kenneth Okonkwo and Francis Agu. This movie marked a significant turning point in Nollywood's thematic evolution, introducing controversial subjects such as witchcraft, ghosts, money rituals, and cultism.

These themes, historically debated in Nollywood scholarship (Elegbe, 2017, pp. 2–5), reveal a broader narrative tension that contrasts Afrocentricity's emphasis on centring African experiences, values, and authentic epistemologies. Mazama (2001, p. 218) argued that this centring is not cosmetic but necessary across all African cultures, societies, and experiences, including spirituality. However, the evolution of Nollywood, while rooted in Afrocentricity, sometimes has shifted from solely celebrating Nigeria's authentic heritage and its harmonious relationship with spiritual traditions to a more complex space that often challenges or distorts these cultural foundations. So, this shift, rather than reinforcing Afrocentric ideals, at times undermines them by accommodating external influences or narratives that dilute Indigenous epistemologies. The normative nature of Afrocentricity underscores the urgency of its consistent application across all aspects of African cultural expression, ensuring that Nollywood remains a medium for self-representation rather than a vehicle for narratives that obscure African identity and agency in global discourse (Humanity, 2022, p. 89).

Similarly, an interviewee, previously mentioned Bayo Bankole, highlighted the importance of the Yoruba concept of Omoluabi (Good manners), emphasising that good behaviour should always be the guiding principle for Nollywood scriptwriters. He stated, *'Bibi ire kose fowora*,' which translates to 'striving towards a good name is better than gold and silver.' In other words, a movie's worth lies in the constructive themes it promotes, not in commercialism.

The Evolution and Growth of Nollywood

The subsequent establishment of Africa Magic in 2003 by MultiChoice further redefined the trajectory of Nollywood. This 24-hour television channel, exclusively dedicated

to showcasing Nigerian films, revolutionised the distribution and consumption of Nollywood content, facilitating unprecedented access to audiences across the African continent (Okome, 2007, pp. 1-21). Africa Magic played a crucial role in professionalising Nollywood, transforming it by improving production quality, expanding audience reach, and creating a structured market. It also provided filmmakers with a steady revenue stream (WIPO, 2025).

In the late 2000s, the emergence of 'New Nigerian Cinema'—also called 'New Nollywood'—marked a significant shift in the industry. This movement was characterised by a deliberate rejection or critique of the term 'Nollywood' by some practitioners and critics, who argued that the label suggested low-budget, hastily produced films lacking in artistic ambition (Endong, 2018; Haynes, 2021). New Nollywood filmmakers aimed to elevate the cinematic experience through higher production values, investment in celluloid or high-definition digital formats, larger budgets, and more meticulous storytelling. They also pursued international exposure through film festivals, co-productions with foreign studios, and distribution to global audiences. Platforms such as Africa Magic and cinema chains like Silverbird Cinema facilitated these ambitions by providing structured distribution channels and reliable revenue streams, enabling filmmakers to invest in higher-quality productions (Ezepue, 2020; WIPO, 2025).

The return of cinema houses was spearheaded by Ben Bruce's Silverbird Cinema, a chain cinema group that opened on Ahmadu Bello Way, Victoria Island, Lagos, in April 2019 (Iwu, 2015, pp. 13–15). Operations by the Silverbird Group have enabled filmmakers to take their movies to cinemas and run them for profit for several months before making them available on home entertainment platforms. This includes private screenings, thereby

maximising profits, which is economically beneficial for the sustenance of Nollywood as an industry.

In addition to its prominent production houses, Nollywood is supported by influential cinema outfits and distributors that play a crucial role in shaping the industry's reach and accessibility. FilmOne Entertainment is a leading player in film production, distribution, and cinema operations. Known for its partnerships with international studios and its commitment to elevating the standards of local cinema, FilmOne has made significant contributions to bringing Nollywood films to domestic and global audiences (Garritano and Harrow, 2018). Similarly, Blue Pictures has carved a niche in the distribution landscape, bridging the gap between Nigerian filmmakers and diverse audience bases. These entities enhance the industry's commercial viability and amplify its cultural export by ensuring Nollywood films gain visibility in cinemas across Nigeria and beyond. Their efforts highlight Nollywood's evolving infrastructure and capacity to compete globally (Oguamanam, 2020, pp. 518–545).

A pivotal development in Nollywood was the introduction of the Motion Picture Practitioners Council of Nigeria (MOPICON) bill, aimed at professionalising the industry, attracting investment, boosting the economy, and preserving culture through high-quality filmmaking. Igwe (2023, pp. 1–15) describes the bill as an '*evolutionary initiative*'—a gradual but transformative step in Nollywood's development. However, it has sparked ongoing debate over potential restrictions, creative limitations, and industry fragmentation.

This debate, driven by Nollywood guilds and social media activism, underscores the industry's need for reform. Some practitioners argue that legal recognition could resolve many systemic issues. The bill, under development for years, saw a significant milestone on April

12, 2016, when then-Minister of Information Lai Mohammed inaugurated a 28-member panel, led by Peace Anyiam-Osigwe, to review its provisions. It sought government approval to establish a regulatory body overseeing Nollywood's operations as a structured industry.

However, the bill faced resistance. According to Aja Nanna Lekwa, a participant interviewed for this project, 'the bill did not enjoy the support of all Nollywood practitioners, partly due to government involvement, which bred suspicion, and because many felt it sought to stifle creativity.' The most contentious sections—4, 11, 32, 36, and 41—raised concerns over council membership criteria, regulatory overreach, strict licensing requirements, harsh penalties, and financial transparency (Adesemoye, 2022, online). Many filmmakers viewed the bill as overly restrictive, fearing it would undermine Nollywood's traditionally independent production model (Igwe, 2017, p. 1428).

While some regulation is necessary, the bill's rigid framework alienated industry professionals. To gain broader acceptance, it must be revised to ensure flexibility and inclusivity, addressing concerns without compromising creative freedom.

Despite MOPICON's inability to gain legal backing, several guilds and associations operate within Nigerian cinema, including the Actors Guild of Nigeria, the Directors Guild of Nigeria, the Independent Television Producers Association of Nigeria, and the Screen Writers Guild of Nigeria. 'Membership in these associations is voluntary, and many workers in Nollywood do not belong to them, some due to financial hardship and the inability to pay the dues and membership fees,' Cephaz (2024) noted in an interview for this study. As a result, these associations do not function as official regulatory bodies recognised by law or the profession they serve.

Alongside these institutional debates and infrastructural developments, scholars have also noted the rise of what has been termed 'New Nigerian Cinema' or 'New Nollywood'. As Geiger (2017, pp. 59–72) explains, this movement reflects both a critique and, for some practitioners, a rejection of the term 'Nollywood', which was seen to trivialise the industry. He argues that 'New Nollywood' is characterised by collaborative financing, larger budgets, and a more transnational dimension of economic, technical, and cultural co-production. This turn marks a deliberate shift away from the low-budget, direct-to-video model, with filmmakers seeking to craft more polished, cinematic experiences designed for theatrical exhibition. Other scholars, such as Haynes (2016), reinforce this view, noting that New Nollywood aspires toward higher production values, festival circulation, and international partnerships. At the same time, Ezepue (2020) highlights the shift toward higher prestige and class transformation within the industry, cautioning that this pursuit of prestige risks reproducing elitism and marginalisation, prompting reflection on whose stories, labour, and audiences are valued within the industry's evolving structures.

International Acclaim

Nollywood's popularity has soared beyond the shores of Nigeria, marking a significant milestone for the industry. Nollywood, Nigeria's burgeoning film industry, has gained international acclaim and profoundly impacted the West African sub-region, despite what Endong (2017, pp. 129–143) described as 'anti-Nigerianess' and nationalist feelings in the region. Despite its prolific output and unique storytelling style, Charles (pp. 110–125) argues that Nigeria's traditional mass media, i.e., radio and television, have failed to promote Nigeria's heritage. Without the evolution of Nollywood, our heritage would probably have been limited in terms of international exposure. This writer has every reason to agree with

Charles' assertion. For instance, a former colleague who lives in Trinidad and Tobago named her daughter Osun after the Yoruba goddess Osun, whom she became aware of through Nollywood movies. A local radio station in Lagos might not have achieved that due to distance. This is the barrier Nollywood shatters with its rapid growth and increasing global recognition. It has become a significant cultural export and a source of pride for Nigeria, with its films now reaching audiences worldwide. One of the key factors contributing to Nollywood's international acclaim is its ability to resonate with audiences worldwide, argues Dipio (2014, pp. 85–108). Using Joseph Straubhaar's idea of cultural proximity theory, she discovered that this was one of the reasons why Nigerian movies are popular in Africa and beyond. In the context of Uganda, they are usually subtitled in the local language, making it easier for fans to connect more with their nuances. In addition to cultural themes, Nollywood films often explore universal themes such as love, family dynamics, and societal issues, making them relatable to viewers from diverse cultural backgrounds. Additionally, the vibrant energy, colourful aesthetics, and dynamic storytelling techniques (though still a work in progress) characteristic of Nollywood productions have captured the imagination of audiences around the globe.

Furthermore, Nollywood's success can be attributed to its filmmakers' unwavering spirit and resilience. Despite facing challenges such as limited budgets, piracy, and infrastructure deficiencies, some Nollywood filmmakers have not just survived but thrived. They have demonstrated remarkable creativity and resourcefulness in producing high-quality films that resonate with audiences locally and internationally. Ojieson (201, pp. 1–2) cautions against Nigerian filmmakers sourcing funds informally and through debt. Instead, he calls for international collaboration, especially given that elsewhere might not be beset with funding issues. Nollywood's international acclaim has been bolstered by its presence on digital

platforms and at international film festivals. The availability of Nollywood films on streaming services has made them accessible to a global audience. Participation in prestigious film festivals has provided filmmakers with opportunities for networking and collaboration, as posited by Wong (2011), as well as recognition on the world stage. Especially in recent years, Nollywood has attracted attention from Hollywood and other international film industries, leading to collaborations and co-productions that have elevated its profile and opened doors for further growth. These partnerships have facilitated the exchange of ideas, talent, and resources and contributed to Nollywood's continued growth and evolution as a global cultural phenomenon.

The global reach of media platforms has also enabled Nollywood to gain international exposure, challenge stereotypes, celebrate African heritage, and contribute to the globalisation of African culture and perspectives. However, global media also significantly impacts cultural norms and practices, including cultural appropriation in Nollywood, a primary global film industry, affecting its cultural identity and storytelling. The urgency of this issue is underscored by the fact that Ibe and Obianyo (2021, pp. 1–5) recommended the protection of Nigeria's heritage under intellectual property rights. The potential consequences of not addressing this issue are significant and must be taken seriously.

The rise of Nollywood in global media has contributed to increasing cultural appropriation, particularly concerning Nigerian cultural elements (Siems, 2019, pp. 408–423). Cultural appropriation occurs when aspects of a culture are misrepresented, replicated without proper recognition, or exploited for profit without benefiting the originating communities (Matthes, 2016, p. 343). This is especially evident on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, where non-Nigerians create comedy skits using software-generated Nigerian accents, a clear

case of misrepresentation of Nigerian culture. Such content reduces Nigerian languages—core markers of identity—to tools for humour or commercial gain, stripping them of context, nuance, and cultural meaning. By mocking linguistic and cultural expressions central to Nollywood storytelling, these social media practices undermine the industry's authenticity, dilute its global reputation, and risk shaping distorted perceptions of Nigerian culture among international audiences. Protecting Nigerian languages from commodification is therefore essential to safeguarding Nollywood's cultural integrity and narrative authority.

To combat cultural appropriation, it is crucial to promote cultural appreciation by ensuring that Nigerian culture is represented authentically and respectfully. This involves proper crediting of cultural elements, fostering collaborations with Nigerian creators, and implementing policies to protect cultural heritage in media. These policies safeguard Nollywood's integrity and empower Nigerian artists and communities to maintain control over their narratives and benefit from global recognition (Ajayi and Adeniran, 2024, pp. 138-148).

Nollywood Factions

Despite all films produced in Nigeria being categorised under Nollywood (Onah, 2016, p. 4), distinct regional brands exist within the industry. Kannywood, Yorubawood, and Igbowood represent the Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo cultures, respectively, producing films in local languages that celebrate their unique cultural narratives and traditions. These regional industries contribute to Nollywood's storytelling diversity, offering distinctive themes, styles, and audiences.

Ironically, despite the richness of Igbo culture, Nollywood has yet to fully explore this aspect of Nigerian heritage, particularly in terms of language use. While Hausa and Yoruba

films are produced in their respective languages, Yoruba heritage is arguably the most prominently represented in Nollywood, primarily through Yoruba-language films. Elegbe and Fadipe (2017) argue that such films function as vehicles for transmitting Indigenous language, cultural and social values central to Yoruba identity, serving not simply as leisure pursuits but as instruments for reinforcing communal norms, safeguarding traditions, and shaping audience perceptions of cultural continuity in the face of globalisation.

In contrast, most films produced by Igbo filmmakers are predominantly in English. Critics such as Ugochukwu (2018, p. 39) have advised industry practitioners to investigate English language hegemony—an ongoing critique of Nollywood. This concern echoes broader debates on cultural authenticity, as Abakporo and Samuel (2017, p.149) highlight in their analysis of Nollywood as *e-culture*, where Igbo cultural motifs are often reduced to what they term 'pseudo-culture,' thereby accelerating and potentially impacting perceptions of cultural erosion in diasporic contexts.

These debates on authenticity also intersect with the way sub-industries within Nollywood attempt to assert distinct identities. Nevertheless, these regional industry labels—Kannywood, Yorubawood, and Igbowood—have not gained widespread recognition or a strong foothold within Nollywood (Musa, 2019). The larger Nollywood umbrella tends to overshadow these other Nigerian 'woods'.

Besides the fact that many pro-Nigerian people who advocate for one nation are not keen to see the industry factionalised, it is understandable that if the sub-divisions enjoy national popularity, international recognition is possible. Nollywood has worldwide legitimacy; this thesis recognises the overarching influence of Nollywood and will not discuss

the factions as independent industries but as part of Nollywood. This approach facilitates a focus on the broader dynamics of Nollywood as a unified entity, aligning with the scope and temporal constraints of the research. Since 1992, Nollywood movies have evolved from being produced on VHS videos to CD players, and now they are primarily available on digital platforms such as YouTube, Prime, Netflix, etc. The release of *Domitilla* (1997) marked a pivotal moment in the evolution of Nollywood. It achieved groundbreaking box-office success, with earnings exceeding £600,000. This achievement represented a significant milestone, highlighting Nollywood's burgeoning potential as a commercially viable industry during its formative years (Haynes, 2000, p. 114).

Fan Experience of Nollywood

Suleiman (2022, pp. 1-14) draws from Dyer's star power theory to highlight the commodification of Nollywood personalities, emphasising their influence in promoting cultural identity. The substantial followership of actors such as Funke Akindele (16.5 million followers) and Mercy Johnson (14.8 million followers) on Instagram exemplifies this acceptance. Beyond their on-screen roles, their personal lives and societal impact are also closely observed, with Akindele's popularity earning her a deputy governorship ticket in Lagos in 2023. Ajayi and Adediran (2022, pp. 138-148) argue that Nollywood's success is mainly due to fans' connection with the industry. This connection is fostered by the way Nollywood actors embody Afrocentric views and African cultural morality both on and off the set. Additionally, the improved quality of Nollywood films has reinforced this bond, further contributing to the industry's success. Internationally, King and Okome (2013, pp. 1-22) demonstrate through a London-based study that diaspora audiences use Nollywood to sustain cultural ties, embracing its portrayal of language, traditions, religion, and customs. These findings provide empirical evidence of Nollywood's dual role as an entertainment industry and a medium for cultural preservation.

Psychological reasons and the 'importance of maintaining homeland connections' are key factors in the diaspora fans' continued support of Nollywood. The movies serve as a link to their cultural heritage, providing a sense of familiarity and connection. This psychological bond with their homeland is a significant driver of their engagement with Nollywood. Nollywood's popularity is not merely about amusement; it's a testament to cultural identity and societal influence. The industry mirrors the lived experiences of Nigerians and Africans, tackling urgent social issues such as corruption, gender inequality, and religious intolerance.

In this way, it not only entertains but also fosters a profound connection between fans and their heritage, serving as a robust platform for social discourse (Abodunrin and Akinola, 2019, pp. 87-100).

Nigerian Film Genres: Categorisation

Although Nollywood scholarship often employs broad distinctions such as 'epic,' 'contemporary,' 'old,' and 'new,' such terms flatten the richness of its output. For a more nuanced understanding, it is beneficial to examine the genres of Nollywood as Shaka (2004) notes; however, the uncritical application of Euro-American genre frameworks can be misleading, since Nollywood thrives on hybridity—blending elements and resisting neat boundaries. The major genres—tragedy, tragicomedy, comedy, romance, action/thriller, horror/fantasy, epic/historical drama, and musical/religious film—not only reflect Nigeria's diverse cultural identities but also situate Nollywood in conversation with other national cinemas. These genres serve as mirrors of Nigeria's complex identity (Osammor, 2017, p.16), though interviewee Nnenna Francisca Nwojiji (2024) cautions against 'presenting a distorted image of our culture to the world's public, portraying it as exotic and magical rather than multifaceted and rich'. Crucially, Shaka argues these genres are not invented in a vacuum but are 'products of what we desire, fear, or are anxious about as a people,' emerging from specific socio-historical contexts. This suggests that genre in Nollywood is less about fixed categories and more about processes of adaptation, in which global cinematic forms are indigenised to express local realities. The result is a dynamic and fluid system of genres that, unlike those in many other national cinemas, consistently foregrounds hybridity as a defining aesthetic, showcasing the cultural richness of Nigerian cinema.

1. **Tragedy**

Nollywood tragedies confront collective anxieties around moral decay and societal collapse. *Living in Bondage* (1992), the landmark Nollywood video about a man who sacrifices his wife for wealth and is haunted by guilt and retribution, and *93 Days* (2016) demonstrate how Aristotelian forms are reworked through oral traditions and ritual aesthetics, as postulated by Bankole (2024) during an interview. He reflected, 'One of the things that makes our tragedy genre excellent is that it usually captures all the traditional six elements a tragedy genre must possess... Ours is even more unique because of the traditional sombre rhythms... If you watch movies such as *Gaa*... you can feel this effect**.** Unlike Hollywood tragedies that focus on individual downfall, Nollywood tragedies foreground communal crises, where private suffering is inextricably linked to national trauma. Harrow (2023) highlights how African cinemas in the digital age adapt global structures while preserving memory, showing that Nollywood tragedies become cultural archives rather than borrowed imitations. Shaka's reading of ritual films like *Living in Bondage* illustrates this hybridity: rather than signalling Westernisation, tragedy in Nollywood reflects the social anxieties, fears, dreams, aspirations and demands of 1990s Nigeria, where mass poverty and the quest for survival drove the genre's local resonance.

This grounding in collective trauma provides a foundation for the tragicomic mode.

2. Tragicomedy

Tragicomedies such as *Taxi Driver: Oko Ashewo* (2015) and *Ojukokoro (Greed)* (2016) illustrate Nollywood's refusal of rigid genre separation. While Western tragicomedies often rely on irony, Nollywood integrates Yoruba philosophies of *Omoluabi* (Azenabor, 2022), in

which moral instruction coexists with humour. Scholars such as Akindele, Omodunbi, and Ige (2020) and Aluko and Odu (2022) view this as a pedagogy of resilience, promoting values like integrity and perseverance. These films thus challenge binary classifications, showing hybridity as both a cultural inheritance and an industry strategy. Shaka links the comic mode directly to historical conditions, arguing that Comedy during the crisis years of the 1990s functioned to assuage the anxieties, fear and sadness of audiences. Tragicomedy, therefore, is not just a blend of tones but a Nollywood-specific response to hardship, diverging from Western conventions through its moral and communal orientation.

The comic element becomes even more pronounced in Nollywood's most commercially dominant genre: Comedy.

3. Comedy

Comedy's prominence in Nollywood is not just a matter of entertainment; it is inextricably linked to its social function. An interviewee, Oluyomi McTaiwo, revealed that 'Comedy is the most-watched genre of Nollywood. This could be related to the current socio-economic situation, which has been challenging since the Babangida era of the 1980s. Films such as *The Wedding Party* (2016), *Phone Swap* (2012), and *Mr Ibu in London* (2010) use humour as a critique of corruption, migration, and family dynamics. The functional importance of Comedy distinguishes Nollywood Comedy from Western traditions, grounding it in Nigeria's rich and diverse cultural identity. Sylvanus (2023, pp. 433-448) highlights the genre's strength in using relatable soundtracks and situations to critique society, while King (2002) notes its accessibility and therapeutic appeal. Comedy operates across registers, reflecting hybridity between global polish and indigenous humour. Shaka underscores this

continuity, situating comedy as a genre with deep cultural roots and functional importance rather than a derivative borrowing, a point emphasised by Adejunmobi (2022, pp. 810-826).

While Comedy often centres on family and social life, Nollywood romances foreground questions of gender, kinship, and love.

4. Romance

Romantic dramas such as *Isoken* (2017) and *Fifty* (2015) navigate tensions between personal choice and communal expectations, particularly in the lives of women. While Western romance often isolates love as private desire, Nollywood romances foreground kinship and social duty. Johnson and Culverson (2016) demonstrate how identities for West African women are constructed and reconstructed through the interplay of Nollywood film narratives, particularly in the romance genre (Johnson and Culverson, 2016, pp. 23-26). Even as Nollywood romances adopt polished production styles encouraged by global platforms (Harrow, 2023), their thematic core resists Western individualism, insisting instead on continuity between modernity and cultural heritage. In this hybridity, the genre both negotiates global cinematic expectations and asserts Nigerian social values.

Where romance examines private relationships, action and thriller films expand these concerns to broader questions of justice and power.

5. Action and Thriller

Nollywood thrillers like *October 1* (2014) and *King of Boys* (2018) draw on global conventions—such as suspense, fast pacing, and investigative narratives—but redirect them towards Nigeria's realities of corruption, violence, and power struggles. These films often

explore moral consequences, reflecting the nation's socio-political climate (Yagboyaju and Akinola, 2019, p.215). Unlike Hollywood thrillers, which usually prioritise spectacle, Nollywood foregrounds historical resonance and moral consequence. Miller (2012) shows how Nollywood participates in 'alternative global networks,' negotiating global stylistics while retaining local priorities. Shaka situates the crime thriller within Nigeria's socio-economic context, linking its emergence to youth unemployment, mass poverty, and the failures of the security apparatus, as dramatised in *Issakaba* (2001). This framing underscores hybridity: rather than a derivative genre, the thriller becomes a site where global forms are reconstituted through local anxieties.

If thrillers interrogate corruption in the material world, horror and fantasy expose unseen fears through the lens of cosmology and spirituality.

6. Horror and Fantasy

Horror and fantasy in Nollywood, exemplified by *The Figurine* (2009) and *The Mirror Boy* (2011), foreground indigenous cosmologies and spirituality. Unlike Western horror, centred on shock and gore, Nollywood horror mobilises myth and morality. Musa (2019) identifies this as 'glocal' storytelling, merging oral traditions with international aesthetics for both local and diaspora audiences. Shaka reinforces this by linking horror to the 'fear of the imagined,' grounded in gossip and social anxieties. Thus, rather than replicating Hollywood horror, Nollywood transforms the genre into a hybrid form where African cosmologies are central to the cinematic experience.

The concern with memory and myth that defines horror and fantasy also shapes epic and historical dramas.

7. Epic and Historical Drama

Epic and historical dramas such as *Invasion 1897* (2014) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2013) reinterpret colonial encounters and civil war through narratives of trauma and resilience. In contrast to Hollywood epics that celebrate triumph, Nollywood epics interrogate unresolved histories (Aremu and Ediagbonya, 2018, pp. 78-90). Shaka's typology—historical, legendary, and fantasy epics—illustrates how the genre prioritises cultural heritage over ritual spectacle. Films like *Igodo* critique contemporary leadership by invoking collective responsibility and sacrificial values. This positions the Nollywood epic as a hybrid form, borrowing global cinematic conventions of spectacle while grounding them in indigenous philosophies of survival and accountability.

The moral and pedagogical function that underpins the epic is further developed in Nollywood's musical and religious genres.

8. Musical and Religious Films

Musical and religious films, such as *The Beat* (2011) and *The Train* (2022), explore the connections between spirituality, morality, and performance. Unlike Western musicals centred on spectacle, Nollywood musicals integrate song into worship and communal life (Columbus, 2014, pp. 208-217). Religious films extend this by dramatising faith and redemption, often through real-life figures, such as biographies of Evangelist Mike Bamiloye and Adeboye, among others, including Apostle Ayo Babalola. Harrow (2023) sees this as a distinct hybridity where pedagogy and entertainment converge. Shaka situates the Christian film genre as a moral counter-response to ritual cinema, designed to address cultism and promote a moral milieu.

The genre thus reveals how Nollywood evolves not through imitation but through internal cultural debates that shape its hybrid forms.

In sum, despite their diversity, these genres share a common logic: they are neither fixed nor reducible to Western categories, but dynamic sites of hybridity. Nollywood continually negotiates between global cinematic forms and local storytelling traditions, affirming Shaka's (2004) warning against reductive classifications. Each genre reflects Nigeria's collective desires and anxieties, reshaping borrowed structures to articulate indigenous values. As interviewee Elechi opines, 'Nollywood is beautiful right now and narrates the tale of this era, during which many disasters occur'. By embedding cultural memory, moral frameworks, and aesthetic traditions within recognisable cinematic forms, Nollywood ensures that historical experience and contemporary realities are represented in ways that resonate both locally and globally.

Filming Methods

The expectation for high-quality films in Nollywood is substantial, given the industry's evolution. At this juncture, the focus shifts to the narrative style, as observed by Ihunwo (n.d., pp. 2–39), who identifies 'market forces, personal conviction, and societal influence' as key drivers of Nollywood storytelling. Ihunwo emphasises narrative over stylistics, asserting that while camera expertise is crucial, the story itself remains the core of practical filmmaking. His research, grounded in narrative theory, highlights Nollywood's deep roots in folktales, a vital component of Nigeria's intangible heritage. He urges directors to prioritise this aspect, citing Lancelot Imasuen as an exemplar of strong narrative alignment from pre-production to post-

production. However, Ihunwo critiques the frequent lack of directorial oversight in post-production, leading to weak conclusions—an issue that cannot be overstated.

Similarly, Ryan (2015, pp. 55–76) critiques the mass-production model of *New Nollywood*, a commercially driven filmmaking approach, as a key factor in declining film quality. He contrasts this with *mainstream Nollywood*, which remains committed to preserving African narratives and cultural memory. Ryan highlights Emem Isong's Royal Arts Academy as an exception, maintaining high standards by prioritising quality over mass production. He further argues that modernisation efforts often sideline heritage discourse, weakening the cultural depth of contemporary Nollywood films.

Oguamanam (2018, pp. 21–22) commends Nollywood's inclusive approach to talent acquisition, where directors recruit actors based on both formal training and innate ability. Nigeria's limited archival infrastructure continues to challenge both research and preservation efforts, constraining scholars' and filmmakers' access to early heritage material. While many actors have trained at institutions such as the Nigerian Film Institute in Jos, the School of Media, and the Nollywood Skill Centre at Lagos Business School, a significant portion enter the industry through talent and cultural knowledge, refining their skills on the job. This application of talent theory sustains Nollywood's narrative authenticity, evident in the expressive performances and nuanced cultural portrayals that define its films. This aligns with the thesis's focus on practical application, emphasising that theory alone is insufficient in a dynamic, practice-driven industry like filmmaking—particularly within the expansive heritage sector. Although Nigeria's limited archival infrastructure continues to challenge practice,

research, and preservation efforts, it constrains scholars' and filmmakers' access to early heritage material.

Gentrification, in the context of Nollywood filmmaking, describes the industry's response to resource constraints. Nollywood filmmakers often depend on improvisation for creative problem-solving and innovation due to limited resources and a lack of time. However, the films reflect Nigerian culture, blending Indigenous storytelling with modern influences. The do-it-yourself mentality fosters creativity and resourcefulness. Digital technology has revolutionised the industry, making it more accessible and affordable. Despite facing challenges, Nollywood thrives as a vibrant force in African cinema (Ezepue, 2020, p.21).

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of Nollywood, drawing on the insights of industry practitioners and academic resources. A historical and chronological account has underscored Nollywood's pivotal role as a cultural repository, safeguarding and disseminating Nigeria's heritage and storytelling traditions. By seamlessly blending mythology, oral traditions, and modern cinema, Nollywood functions as a contemporary griot, preserving cultural memory and reinforcing national identity amid the pressures of globalisation and westernisation. Beyond mere entertainment, it serves as a cinematic archive that reflects and reinterprets the nation's socio-cultural identity, allowing audiences to engage with its historical narratives and evolving ethos.

The chapter has further examined the intricate dynamics of Nigeria's tangible and intangible heritage, critically analysing the interplay between colonial legacies, contemporary cultural evolution, and the rich traditions of the diverse ethnic groups that constitute the nation.

Building on the introduction's detailed discussion of the Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, and Edo tribes with significant cultural influence in Nigeria, this chapter has explored how their unique traditions, languages, and artistic expressions continue to shape Nollywood's narrative frameworks. Tangible heritage encompasses material artefacts, including traditional costumes, monuments, and historically significant landscapes, while intangible heritage comprises oral traditions, indigenous languages, music, dance, and ritual practices (UNESCO, 2024). However, Nollywood's role in heritage preservation is not without challenges. The industry grapples with systemic barriers such as weak intellectual property laws, piracy, funding shortages, and the tension between commercial viability and cultural authenticity. Additionally, Nollywood's increasing global recognition brings both opportunities and risks, including cultural appropriation, where Nigerian cultural elements are misrepresented or commodified without due recognition, potentially undermining the industry's cultural integrity.

As this research advances, the first chapter will present a literature review on Nigerian heritage, emphasising orature, engaging with seminal works, and key academic contributions in heritage studies. This review will critically examine theoretical frameworks defining and interpreting Nigeria's cultural legacy, ensuring alignment with the study's objectives. Furthermore, it will consider strategies for strengthening Nollywood's capacity as a global cultural ambassador, advocating for institutional reforms, financial sustainability, and policies that protect intellectual property and cultural authenticity. Subsequent chapters will then return to the central discourse on Nollywood, interrogating its role as a vehicle for cultural representation and its function within the broader heritage discourse.

Chapter One

1 Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

Nigeria's heritage, deeply rooted in its diverse cultures, languages, and traditions, provides a rich tapestry of oral literature (Otiono, 2021) as both a historical archive and a living cultural expression (Anasiudu, 2023). This chapter examines Nigeria's oral literature and heritage within the frameworks of Afrocentricity, decolonisation, cultural memory, and other related theoretical prisms, contextualising these practices in the broader discourse of intellectual thought relevant to this study. The chapter draws from the theories and works of seminal thinkers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and Amos Tutuola, alongside Afrocentric scholars like Molefi Kete Asante, and decolonial theorists such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. Nigeria's oral literature, as an intangible heritage, is explored through these lenses as a critical tool for cultural preservation, identity formation, and resistance to cultural imperialism (Ojaide, 2015).

Works from scholars, such as Alabi (2024), have highlighted how proverbs are linguistic tools and cultural symbols that help preserve and transmit traditional knowledge in the face of globalisation and modernity. His studies emphasise the dynamic nature of proverbs, noting their adaptability to new contexts while retaining their core function as conveyors of moral and societal values. Similarly, Attado (2023) has examined how proverbs remain pivotal in shaping social identities, particularly in urban settings, where they bridge the gap between tradition and modernity. These scholars argue that proverbs remain indispensable in maintaining cultural

continuity and fostering resilience against cultural erosion, illustrating their ongoing relevance in Nigeria's evolving socio-political landscape. Proverbs, central to Nigeria's oral literature, act as distilled wisdom and tools for teaching cultural values. Achebe's often-cited line, 'Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten,' illustrates their significance in fostering clarity and moral instruction (Achebe, 1958). These proverbs encapsulate the collective wisdom of a people and offer insights into their worldview. For instance, the Yoruba saying, 'A river that forgets its source will dry up,' emphasises the importance of cultural memory and continuity—a theme resonating with the Afrocentric emphasis on reclaiming African heritage (Asante, 1980).

Proverbs, deeply rooted in Nigeria's oral literature, are a testament to the profound wisdom and depth of this cultural heritage. Nollywood, drawing on this rich oral tradition, weaves proverbs into its narratives as guiding beacons that illuminate meaning, resolve conflicts, and uphold cultural values. This inheritance forms the narrative backbone of many Nollywood films, where proverbs are not mere adornments; they shape dialogue and elevate filmic messages, serving as the moral and philosophical core of the storytelling tradition. The use of proverbs in Nollywood is thus not a stylistic flourish but a deliberate cultural strategy that anchors cinematic narratives in indigenous epistemologies and ethical reasoning.

In *Aníkúlápó* (2022), for instance, the proverb 'Ẹni tí ó bá ní owó, ti kò ní ọgbọ́n, yóò fi gbogbo rẹ́ ṣeré' ('He who has wealth but lacks wisdom will squander it') is directed at Saro, the protagonist, at the peak of his greed; it encapsulates the film's central caution against arrogance and excess. The proverb functions not only as a moral commentary but also as a narrative pivot, encapsulating a collective worldview that transcends the individual character's destiny. Similarly, in *Iyore* (2015), the recurring Edo proverb 'Ókhuó mà kóyo, óbò yá do' ('When a woman carries

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patience, the earth itself bears fruit') frames Osarugue's struggle and sacrifice, reinforcing the cultural ideal of endurance and destiny. These instances demonstrate that proverbs in Nollywood are not incidental but serve as interpretive tools that decode characters' motivations and moral paths, engaging the audience in a deeper understanding of the narrative.

A closer analysis of their recurrence and function across genres and languages in Nollywood further confirms their integral narrative and philosophical role. Proverbs act as repositories of communal wisdom, embedding within filmic discourse the ethical reasoning and worldview of Nigerian societies. They bridge spoken tradition and visual narrative, giving film dialogues a rhythmic and moral resonance that pure exposition could not achieve. Through them, filmmakers translate oral heritage into cinematic language, ensuring that indigenous moral codes and collective consciousness remain intelligible and relevant within modern visual storytelling.

In this way, Nollywood acts as a custodian of oral heritage, incorporating proverbs into modern cinema, not only preserving them but also magnifying their role as vessels of cultural authority and shared wisdom. Nigerian culture, with its linguistic diversity, would be incomplete without proverbs, for it is through proverbs that language achieves its most profound depth of meaning and moral force (Finnegan, 2012). Beyond proverbs, Nigerian narratives extend into literature, where folklore and mythology continue to shape collective identity, and Nollywood, by embracing these elements, reinforces the audience's pride and connection to their cultural roots.

1.2 Folklore and Mythology In Nigerian Literature: A Postcolonial Perspective

Expanding on this discourse, the intersection of cinema, heritage, and cultural identity has been a key area of academic investigation, particularly in discussions on how film serves as a medium for conserving, reinterpreting, and transmitting cultural memory. Janet Harbord (2007)

suggests in her research on the evolution of film that cinema is not just a mirror of culture, but a cultural institution that actively participates in shaping collective ways of seeing and remembering, highlighting how Nollywood actively shapes Nigerian cultural identity. Belén Vidal (2012) examines how heritage cinema negotiates national identities, illustrating how historical narratives on screen are continually reframed in response to contemporary cultural concerns. Dagmar Brunow (2015) underscores the archival potential of film, emphasising how cinematic practices can contest dominant historical accounts and foster more inclusive understandings of heritage. Similarly, Giovanna Fossati (2009; 2011) foregrounds the materiality of film heritage, demonstrating how preservation, digitisation, and restoration are essential for sustaining cultural continuity. Taken together, these perspectives offer a robust framework for understanding Nollywood's dual role as both a custodian of Nigerian heritage—through its engagement with oral traditions, ritual aesthetics, and historical memory—and as a dynamic force in the redefinition of African cultural identity within a globalised media landscape, illustrating that cinema and literature both function as complementary sites of heritage preservation, inspiring us with its transformative potential.

Just as cinema preserves and reinterprets Nigeria's oral heritage, literary works similarly draw upon folklore and mythology to articulate postcolonial experiences and reclaim cultural identity.

Integrating folklore and mythology into Nigerian literature bridges traditional narratives with modern realities while safeguarding the nation's rich cultural heritage. Nigerian authors articulate postcolonial concerns by infusing oral traditions with literary innovation, asserting the vitality of indigenous knowledge systems. Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952) exemplifies this synthesis, drawing deeply from Yoruba cosmology. Its episodic narrative and surrealist aesthetic disrupt Western literary norms, positioning African oral traditions as powerful

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vehicles of cultural preservation and resistance. Its distinctive linguistic style aligns with broader post-colonial themes, paralleling Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's call for linguistic and cultural emancipation in *Decolonising the Mind* (1986). This connection highlights the role of language in reclaiming indigenous worldviews. Further exploration will reveal the broader impact of decolonisation and cultural reclamation.

Following Tutuola's integration of Yoruba cosmology, Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975) further explores the intersection of mythology and colonial disruption. By dramatising the clash between communal spiritual imperatives and colonial governance, Soyinka echoes Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), which critiques cultural alienation under colonial rule. Both works interrogate the erosion of indigenous traditions in the face of imperial dominance, illustrating the profound psychological and societal ruptures engendered by colonialism.

Soyinka's dramatisation of colonial disjunction resonates with Valentin Mudimbe's critique of imposed knowledge systems, illustrating both literary and theoretical perspectives on cultural negotiation. Equally, this tension between colonial authority and indigenous resilience reflects Valentin Mudimbe's concept of the *colonial library* in *The Invention of Africa* (1988), which critiques how colonial frameworks construct and constrain African knowledge systems. Just as Soyinka dramatises the struggle between indigenous traditions and colonial governance, Mudimbe reveals how African cultures are compelled to negotiate and reinterpret their identities within imposed colonial epistemologies, demonstrating both the persistence of indigenous worldviews and the transformative pressures of colonial rule.

Through writers such as Malam Dogari and Abubakar Imam's seminal work *Ruwan Bagaja* (1934), Hausa folklore underscores themes of justice, wisdom, and community unity. These

narratives serve as cultural preservation and frameworks for negotiating identity and reinforcing social cohesion. Dogari's literary contributions and Imam's storytelling provide valuable insights into the moral and societal values that bind the community. Bawa et al. (2022) assert that folklore offers a critical lens to examine identity within Nigeria's diverse multicultural landscape. As both entertaining and instructional, Hausa folklore nurtures cultural heritage, ensuring the integration of traditional values into evolving discourse. By addressing contemporary challenges through time-honored narratives, these writers facilitate the adaptation of tradition to modern contexts, bridging past and present.

Beyond regional folklore, contemporary Nigerian drama illustrates how myth continues to inform social critique. In contemporary Nigerian drama, works like Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* (2019) integrate legendary figures such as Moremi into narratives that critique societal inequalities. This fusion of folklore with socio-political commentary not only illustrates how Nigerian writers utilise myth but also inspires resistance and collective action. Scholars like Adeoti (2019) affirm that such adaptations enhance political engagement, while Osanyemi (2018) warns that recent literary trends often deviate from this practice, risking cultural disconnect. We align with this perspective, highlighting that adaptive storytelling techniques, as reflected in Isidore Okpewho's (1992) concept of hybridity, are essential for ensuring folklore remains relevant. Okpewho's hybridity, which involves blending oral traditions with modern literary forms, connects to storytelling by allowing folklore to evolve within contemporary narratives, bridging the past and present. By continuously reshaping folklore to address evolving cultural identities, Nigerian literature sustains its dynamic connection to heritage.

Despite some recent trends where orature appears less frequently, scholarship from Akoh, Odeh, and Igwe (2022) to Uwadiegwu, Kpanah, and Ifeoma (2024) confirms that Nigerian

literature continues to reinterpret oral traditions, ensuring folklore remains a vibrant tool for cultural negotiation and resistance. Writers reinterpret these forms to critique globalisation and advocate for cultural resilience, ensuring that folklore remains vital for cultural negotiation and resistance in modern Nigerian literature.

1.3 Theoretical Approaches to Nigeria's Oral Heritage

Nigeria's oral heritage, a dynamic repository of cultural, historical, and ethical narratives, operates at the intersection of communal identity and intellectual agency (Nwankwo, Agboeze and Nwobi, 2018). This thesis not only underscores the intrinsic value of oral literature but also situates it as a critical framework for addressing the erosion of cultural identity in postcolonial Nigeria, a view supported by scholars such as Okpewho (1992) and Finnegan (2012), who emphasise the continuity of oral traditions in sustaining collective memory, as well as more recent studies by Akinsola (2025), who demonstrates how Yoruba orature fosters cultural resilience through education, and Okanume and Oji (2023), who highlight oral literature's role in promoting unity, moral values, and cultural preservation.

This section expands on the theoretical implications of oral heritage, linking and contrasting these traditions with relevant scholarly literature, highlighting how Nigerian oral literature functions as a medium of resistance, pedagogy, and identity formation.

The study of Nigerian oral heritage reveals its dynamic capacity to preserve cultural identity, negotiate postcolonial realities, and adapt to contemporary challenges. Drawing from diverse theoretical frameworks, scholars have articulated how oral traditions function as repositories of cultural memory and instruments of resilience. Among these frameworks,

Afrocentricity, cultural memory, and historical analysis are central to understanding the interplay between preservation and adaptation in Nigerian oral traditions (Asante, 2003; Mazama, 2001).

Molefi Kete Asante's theory of Afrocentricity offers a pivotal foundation for exploring Nigeria's oral traditions. By centring African perspectives in interpreting African cultural systems, Asante rejects the dominance of Eurocentric paradigms (Asante, 2003). Within this framework, oral traditions are not merely relics of the past but active agents of cultural reclamation. Examples such as the Yoruba Ogun myth or Igbo creation narratives illustrate this principle, showcasing indigenous knowledge systems that resist colonial erasure. Ama Mazama extends this discourse by emphasising the intrinsic connection between African spirituality and oral traditions, arguing that oral traditions are inseparable from the cosmological and moral frameworks of their societies (Mazama, 2003). This spiritual dimension is evident in Yoruba oral practices like *Oriki* (praise poetry), which invokes deities and ancestors to reinforce communal identity and continuity. Asante and Mazama situate Nigerian oral heritage as a mechanism of cultural empowerment and resilience, foregrounding Indigenous agency in navigating both historical and contemporary realities.

Onyima (2020) underscores the transformative potential of cultural memory, arguing that oral traditions must evolve while preserving their cultural specificity. This dual necessity—preservation and adaptability—frames the negotiation of identity in both local and global contexts. Onyima's exploration of decolonising African studies reinforces this perspective, advocating for methodologies that bridge traditional epistemologies with contemporary academic practices. Similarly, in a complementary vein, the concept of cultural memory, as articulated by Falola (2003), underscores the vital role of oral traditions in integrating collective and personal histories. Falola highlights how folklore and mythology are tools for articulating identity and, importantly,

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for preserving cultural values in evolving contexts. For example, Yoruba myths and Igbo folklore are not static entities but are continuously adapted to reflect and critique contemporary societal concerns. This adaptability, Falola argues, ensures the longevity and relevance of oral traditions in a rapidly changing world.

Historical analyses provide additional depth to the study of Nigerian oral heritage. Akin Ogundiran's *The Yoruba: A New History* (2021) emphasises Yoruba oral traditions, presenting them as mechanisms of cultural resilience across centuries. Ogundiran highlights how historical narratives, such as those embodied in Yoruba cosmology, offer frameworks for interpreting contemporary realities. These traditions, he argues, serve not only as reflections of the past but also as tools for navigating postcolonial challenges. However, Ogundiran's work primarily focuses on historical contexts, leaving gaps in its application to modern literary forms.

This limitation underscores the need to understand how oral traditions intersect with contemporary narratives and societal challenges. Although historical works like Abubakar Imam's *Ruwan Bagaja* (1934) integrate Hausa folklore into written narratives, they reflect an earlier phase of cultural adaptation rather than addressing the postcolonial or globalised contexts dominating modern discourse. Scholars like Falola and Onyima provide frameworks for understanding how oral traditions continue to evolve in contemporary literature and cultural practices, filling the theoretical gap between Ogundiran's historical analyses and the present-day relevance of folklore.

 Despite these rich contributions, the field continues to explore how oral traditions are transmitted and transformed across different contexts. Falola (2003) and Onyima (2020) highlight scholarly interest in how communities and writers preserve and reinterpret folklore in an increasingly interconnected world. My research complements this by examining Nollywood

storytelling as a medium through which Nigerian heritage is conveyed and adapted, demonstrating the role of film in the continuity and transformation of cultural identity.

In sum, theoretical perspectives on Nigerian oral heritage recognise its adaptability, resilience, and evolving function within changing socio-cultural contexts. Afrocentricity offers a critical framework for reclaiming indigenous agency and repositioning African epistemologies within global discourse. The concept of cultural memory highlights how oral traditions sustain, reinterpret, and transmit collective histories, while historical approaches situate these traditions within broader power structures and processes of modernity. Collectively, these perspectives reveal the fluid negotiation between continuity and transformation, affirming oral heritage as a dynamic, living expression of cultural identity (Diawar, 1996).

These theoretical insights directly inform the central research question—to what extent has Nollywood storytelling contributed to Nigerian heritage—and align with the broader aim of this study, which is to examine how the industry functions as both a cultural archive and an agent of renewal. By situating Nollywood within the continuum of oral and performative traditions, the research interprets the film industry not merely as a site of entertainment but as a medium through which heritage is rearticulated and projected into global spaces. This alignment enables a critical evaluation of how Nollywood mediates between local authenticity and transnational visibility, thereby contributing to the preservation, transformation, and dissemination of Nigerian cultural identity.

Analytically, this alignment underscores that the contribution of Nollywood to heritage cannot be understood solely in terms of representation but through its active role in negotiating cultural meaning under conditions of globalisation and media convergence. The industry's

narrative strategies, aesthetic choices, and thematic preoccupations demonstrate how traditional modes of storytelling are reconfigured within digital and commercial frameworks, revealing both the resilience and vulnerability of cultural expression in a global context.

Ultimately, this synthesis between theoretical perspectives, the research question, and the overarching aim establishes the intellectual architecture of the study. It situates the analysis of Nollywood as a means of exploring broader questions about heritage production, cultural continuity, and identity formation in postcolonial Africa. By foregrounding the interplay between theory and practice, the research thus contributes to a deeper understanding of how Nigerian storytelling evolves as both a local inheritance and a global discourse.

1.3.1 Afrocentricity and Nigerian Oral Heritage

Afrocentricity provides a rigorous theoretical lens for interrogating Nigerian oral traditions as epistemic frameworks that assert cultural sovereignty and resist hegemonic impositions. Molefi Kete Asante (1980) defines Afrocentricity as 'a mode of thought and action in which the centrality of African interests, values, and perspectives predominate' a formulation that aligns with the communal and performative nature of Nigerian oral traditions. These traditions, such as the Yoruba Ifá divination system (Abimbola, 1976), embody a non-Western epistemology that privileges collective wisdom over individual authorship, reinforcing Asante's advocacy for African agency in knowledge production.

However, a critical tension emerges when Afrocentricity's emphasis on cultural purity encounters the fluidity of Nigerian oral traditions in an increasingly hybridised world. In *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy (1993) complicates Asante's framework by positioning African diasporic

cultures as intrinsically hybrid, continuously reconstituted through transnational exchanges. While Gilroy's perspective is rooted in the specific historical trauma and cultural syncretism of the forcibly displaced diaspora, his theorisation of dynamic, non-essentialist identity provides a useful, if distinct, parallel. This critique invites interrogation of whether Afrocentricity, with its ontological grounding in cultural reclamation, sufficiently accounts for the dynamic evolution of Nigerian oral traditions amid global transformations that occur from a position of geographic and cultural rootedness, rather than displacement.

Nigeria's oral heritage thus becomes a contested site where Afrocentric principles intersect with the realities of cultural adaptation and hybridity. For instance, the Urhobo people's Udje songs, while deeply rooted in indigenous aesthetics, have evolved to incorporate contemporary socio-political commentaries (Otite, 1994; Ojaide, 2001, 2023). This demonstrates that oral traditions are not static; as Falola (2003, p. 14) notes, 'traditions survive not by standing still, but by transforming and adjusting to new realities.' Similarly, Barber (1991) highlights that African oral art forms constantly negotiate between continuity and innovation, ensuring survival through reinvention. Yet this adaptability also raises the question of cultural dilution: excessive remixing or commercialisation can strip oral traditions of their layered meanings. Barber (1997, p.350) cautions that the popularisation of African expressive forms often 'reduces richly layered traditions into consumable fragments'. Likewise, Ranger (1983) introduces the notion of 'invented traditions,' reminding us that cultural practices risk being reconstituted in ways that privilege superficial novelty over indigenous depth and authenticity. In this sense, Afrocentricity's concern with dilution speaks less to opposition to dynamism than to a defence against the flattening of cultural memory.

Furthermore, the impact of digital media on oral traditions necessitates a re-examination of Afrocentricity's applicability in the 21st century. Online platforms and transnational dialogues contribute to an ever-expanding performative space where oral traditions are recontextualised, sometimes subverting and reinforcing Afrocentric paradigms (Coteli, 2019). Scholars have shown that digital mediation both revitalises and destabilises oral heritage: Anọba (2023) highlights how Nigerian oral narratives gain renewed performativity online, while Nyamnjoh (2015) underscores the risks of dislocation when cultural practices are lifted from their indigenous contexts. Seen this way, digital mediation can either intensify dilution through trivialisation or, alternatively, provide new grounds for Afrocentric affirmation by circulating oral forms to broader audiences. As Wagner (2023) also notes in a UNESCO-aligned study, digital technologies simultaneously preserve and commodify intangible heritage, raising questions about authenticity and ownership. This fluidity underscores the need for a more dialectical engagement with Afrocentricity, which acknowledges its critical function in decolonial discourse and its limitations in accommodating cultural syncretism.

Thus, the discourse on Nigerian oral heritage necessitates a nuanced approach that neither romanticises cultural authenticity nor dismisses the agency inherent in adaptation. Instead, it calls for a recalibrated Afrocentric framework (Harris,2005) that integrates the dynamism of oral traditions within its imperative for African epistemological centrality, without negating their inevitable entanglements with global influences.

1.3.2 Globalisation, Afrocentricity, and Cultural Appropriation of Nigerian Culture

Globalisation, while facilitating the widespread dissemination of cultural practices, also introduces the risks of cultural homogenisation and appropriation, particularly for indigenous cultures such as those in Nigeria. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, cultural

elements—especially oral traditions and literary practices—are more accessible globally. While this can be seen as a positive development, it often commodifies these traditions, divorcing them from their original context and leading to a significant loss of their cultural meanings. Claude Ake's (1996) theory of cultural imperialism, which refers to the process by which dominant cultures, particularly Western ones, shape global representations at the expense of marginalised cultures, highlights this tension. This perspective has been further examined by Olaore and Drolet (2017), who underscore how cultural commodification distorts and dilutes local traditions. Ake argues that this cultural commodification transforms cultural elements into global commodities for profit, losing their deeper cultural meanings. He defines cultural imperialism as the process by which dominant cultures, particularly Western ones, shape global representations at the expense of marginalised cultures (Ake, 1996).

Integrating an Afrocentric perspective into this discussion allows for reframing globalisation's impact on Nigerian culture, positioning African epistemologies at the centre of analysis rather than as peripheral to Western paradigms. Bayo Oyebade's (1990) 'Afrocentricity: theoretical perspectives'argue that African cultures should be examined within their own historical and philosophical contexts rather than through the lens of Western interpretations. Applying Afrocentricity to cultural appropriation reveals that the commodification of Nigerian traditions often results from a fundamental imbalance in cultural power, where Western narratives dictate the terms of engagement with African cultural heritage. This perspective challenges the legitimacy of external actors' claims to Nigerian oral traditions and literary practices and underscores the urgent need for a decolonised, self-representational approach to cultural exchange. This is not merely a theoretical proposition but a compelling call to action for empowerment and self-determination.

Consolidating on Ake's critique, Zainab Omaki (2023) analyses how ethnic tensions influence literary cultural appropriation within Nigeria. Omaki highlights how cultural symbols and narratives by scholars and writers from dominant ethnic groups may draw from marginalised communities to create works that fit global expectations of 'African' heritage. This frequently results in stereotypical or exoticised representations of cultures that overlook or distort the complexities of these communities. Omaki's theory of Ethnic Cultural Appropriation within Nigerian literature highlights how literary production can serve as a cultural preservation tool, a means of maintaining and promoting the unique aspects of a culture, while exploiting marginalised groups for global consumption (Omaki, 2023). Afrocentricity further supports Omaki's critique by advocating for self-determination in cultural production, ensuring that Nigerian literary works reflect indigenous voices rather than narratives shaped to fit Western expectations. Omaki emphasises the tension between maintaining cultural authenticity and meeting the demands of a global literary and cultural market that often rewards oversimplified portrayals. This pattern of literary appropriation mirrors Ake's broader critique of globalisation's tendency to commodify cultural elements. As global literary markets shape how Nigerian cultures are represented, they often do so at the cost of their actual complexity and originality (Ukhami, Lassana, and Kabir, 2024).

In their article on cultural appropriation, Patti Tamara Lenard and Peter Balint (2020) offer a more theoretical framework for understanding the ethical implications of cultural appropriation. They draw on the Theory of Power and Exploitation, which argues that appropriation becomes harmful when it involves an imbalance of power, with dominant groups benefiting from the cultural elements of marginalised communities without proper recognition or compensation (Dagnino, 2019). This theory posits that cultural appropriation is not just about the act of taking

cultural elements, but also about the power dynamics and exploitation involved. This power imbalance is central to both Omaki's and Ake's critiques. The appropriation of Nigerian oral traditions or literary symbols by external actors—whether through commercial media, literature, or other cultural production—often occurs without sufficient acknowledgement of the cultural significance or the communities that originated these practices. From an Afrocentric standpoint, this imbalance is not merely a matter of ethical concern but a continuation of historical, cultural dispossession that requires active reclamation. Lenard and Balint's framework suggests that cultural appropriation is particularly harmful when it results in the exploitation of culture for profit or perpetuates stereotypes that further marginalise the community being appropriated (Lenard and Balint, 2020). This theory provides a nuanced understanding of the ethical stakes in cultural appropriation, particularly regarding the commodification of Nigerian culture.

Ariel Mosley et al. (2024) provide an empirical perspective on cultural appropriation, exploring how perceptions of harm and benefit influence judgments about this phenomenon. Their research draws on Social Identity Theory, which examines how individuals identify with and evaluate cultural elements based on group membership (Mosley et al., 2024). Mosley et al. (2024) find that cultural appropriation is generally viewed as harmful, mainly when it involves using cultural elements without permission or acknowledgement. Additionally, the study reveals that when people recognise cultural appropriation, they are less likely to view the appropriating actor as benefiting legitimately or fairly. These findings offer further support for the ethical frameworks proposed by Lenard and Balint, underscoring the perceived harm in situations where cultural elements are taken out of their original context, commodified, and sold for profit without respect for the originating culture (Mosley et al., 2024). Afrocentricity strengthens this argument by

asserting that cultural ownership and self-definition are critical components of African identity, reinforcing the idea that cultural heritage should be controlled and narrated by those it belongs to.

Comparing these theoretical and empirical insights on cultural appropriation reveals the complexities and common threads in the discourse surrounding Nigerian cultural heritage in a globalised world. Ake's theory of cultural imperialism (Ake,1996) aligns with Lenard and Balint's Power and Exploitation Framework, both of which emphasise the need to consider the broader socio-political dynamics in cultural appropriation. Omaki's theory of Ethnic Cultural Appropriation adds specificity, showing how intra-national ethnic power imbalances affect the appropriation of cultural elements within Nigerian literature. Meanwhile, Mosley et al.'s use of Social Identity Theory offers an empirical dimension to the ethical concerns about harm and profit, showing how appropriating culture is often seen as unfair when external actors profit without proper recognition of the originating community. These perspectives collectively suggest that while globalisation has the potential to share Nigerian culture with the world, it also creates significant risks for the distortion and exploitation of cultural traditions. However, they also inspire hope by advocating for equitable cultural exchange. The challenge lies in balancing global exposure with cultural integrity; nevertheless, the potential for equitable exchange remains latent, awaiting realisation. This underscores the imperative of fair cultural exchange as a cornerstone for the sustainable future of Nigerian cultural expression. Onyenankeya et al. (2017) illustrate this dynamic through the reception of Nollywood films by South African audiences, who actively and respectfully negotiate Nigerian cultural markers—such as language and social norms. Their findings demonstrate how the transnational circulation of cultural products can facilitate meaningful cross-cultural engagement while preserving the authenticity and agency of the originating culture.

1.3.3 Decolonisation and the Recovery of Oral Epistemologies

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986), in *Decolonising the Mind*, foregrounds language as both a vehicle of cultural continuity and a site of resistance against imperial epistemicide. His assertion that 'language carries culture, and culture carries the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world' underscores the existential stakes of linguistic erasure under colonial rule. The suppression of African languages functioned not merely as cultural displacement but as an ontological violence that severed communities from their epistemic traditions. Yet, despite this, Nigerian oral literature emerges as a counter-hegemonic praxis, demonstrating a remarkable resilience and challenging the hegemonic script of colonial textuality.

Wole Soyinka's dramaturgical engagement with Yoruba cosmology in *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975) exemplifies this reclamation but also problematises it. His reconstruction of Yoruba ritual resists colonial misrepresentations yet, as Biodun Jeyifo (2004) critiques, risks inscribing an esoteric hermeticism that alienates contemporary audiences unfamiliar with its semiotic density. This tension—between authenticity and accessibility—reveals a critical fault line in decolonial praxis: whether oral traditions should remain embedded in their Indigenous signifying systems or be adapted for broader pedagogical engagement.

Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972) extends this discussion by situating the decline of oral epistemologies within the longue durée of economic subjugation. Colonial capitalism disrupted communal knowledge structures and transformed cultural production into a commodified spectacle, severing oral traditions from their participatory function. This insight necessitates a nuanced examination of postcolonial orality, where heritage preservation is inextricable from economic justice. The importance of cultural revival in this

context cannot be overstated, as it is a crucial step towards economic justice. Thus, the decolonisation of epistemology cannot be divorced from the material conditions that sustain its transmission, requiring a dialectical approach that integrates cultural revival with socio-economic restructuring.

1.3.4 Négritude, Afrocentricity, and the Reclamation of Nigerian Heritage

The theoretical underpinnings of Négritude and Afrocentricity, significant in their weight and depth, offer a critical lens through which the reclamation of Nigerian heritage can be interrogated. This positions our study within a broader discourse on cultural resurgence and historical reassertion. Aimé Césaire's Négritude, articulated in *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land* (2017), operates as both a literary and ideological rebuke of colonial epistemicide, foregrounding African cultural affirmation against imposed Eurocentrism (Césaire, 2001). This ethos finds resonance in Nigeria's diverse ethnocultural systems—Yoruba metaphysical constructs, Igbo republicanism, and Hausa-Fulani socio-political structures—each of which embodies Indigenous epistemologies disrupted by colonial modernity.

Similarly, Cheikh Anta Diop's historiographical interventions, particularly in *The African Origin of Civilisation* (1974), dismantle Eurocentric historiographies by repositioning African civilisations at the core of world history. His emphasis on precolonial African agency parallels Nigeria's Nok, Ife, and Benin civilisations, which exemplify autonomous artistic, political, and philosophical traditions. These historical frameworks not only underscore the intellectual sovereignty of African epistemes but also function as counter-hegemonic tools in the project of decolonial reclamation.

By situating Nigerian heritage within this Afrocentric paradigm, the study foregrounds cultural preservation as an act of ongoing epistemic resistance, aligning with contemporary decolonisation imperatives (Falola and Heaton, 2022). This approach asserts that reclaiming Nigeria's historical and cultural identity is not merely a retrospective endeavour but an evolving discourse essential to dismantling residual colonial structures and redefining African self-perception on its own ontological terms.

1.4 The Role of Oral Literature in Identity Formation and Resistance

This thesis situates Nigerian oral literature as a dynamic and crucial framework for understanding the negotiation of cultural identity, memory, and resistance in postcolonial Nigeria. Drawing on the works of Walter Rodney (1972, 2024), Benedict Anderson (1983), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009, 2024), Kofi Awoonor (1975), and others, it emphasises the role of oral traditions in shaping collective identities and resisting external cultural influences. Awoonor's analysis of cultural autonomy preserved through oral traditions highlights the importance of reclaiming and maintaining indigenous knowledge systems (Awoonor, 1975). Likewise, Adichie's portrayal of storytelling in her novels illuminates how these traditions negotiate historical narratives and assert African agency in the face of postcolonial challenges (Adichie, 2009).

Benedict Anderson's concept of 'imagined communities' reinforces the argument that oral literature plays a foundational role in constructing national identity (Anderson, 1983). Anderson posits that nations are socially constructed through shared symbols, language, and collective memory, allowing individuals to perceive themselves as part of a larger, cohesive entity despite never meeting most fellow members. In the Nigerian context, oral traditions function as a primary vehicle for transmitting these shared narratives across generations, solidifying a national consciousness that transcends ethnic and regional divisions. By sustaining historical memory and

cultural continuity, oral literature fosters a unified yet diverse national identity. This thesis examines Nigeria's oral heritage both as a means of preserving historical memory and as a living practice that actively shapes contemporary social, political, and cultural realities. This perspective underscores the continued relevance of oral traditions as repositories of cultural wisdom and mechanisms for resisting cultural erasure (Ohenhen and Abakporo, 2024).

Partha Chatterjee's critique of 'imagined communities'—which argues that nations are shaped not only through social constructs but also by postcolonial struggles and indigenous cultural frameworks—further substantiates this analysis (Chatterjee, 1993). Oral traditions, by engaging with Nigeria's shared narratives, reinforce collective consciousness and unity. This thesis thus demonstrates the enduring impact of oral literature on the nation's present, reaffirming its role in shaping identity and resisting cultural marginalisation (Ohenhen and Abakporo, 2024).

1.4.1 Decolonisation and the Revival of Indigenous Epistemologies

Decolonisation, as articulated by scholars such as Táíwò (2022), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986), and Falola and Heaton (2022), is not merely a rejection of colonial legacy but a comprehensive intellectual and cultural reclamation. For Táíwò, decolonisation is a dynamic, integrative process that decentres Western epistemologies and repositions Indigenous African knowledge systems at the centre of intellectual discourse. This understanding aligns with Ngũgĩ's argument in *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) earlier mentioned. To expatiate on the earlier point, he calls for the intellectual decolonisation of African societies by reclaiming African languages and oral traditions suppressed by colonial powers in favour of Western languages and education. While Ngũgĩ's focus on language highlights the psychological and cultural impact of colonial education, Táíwò emphasises the need to reassert the epistemic legitimacy of African knowledge traditions in both the postcolonial and global contexts.

For Nigeria, decolonisation is intricately tied to the revival of its heritage and orature, which have long been vital in transmitting knowledge. Falola and Heaton (2022) argue that the colonial period significantly altered the landscape of Nigerian historiography, erasing Indigenous modes of knowledge transmission in favour of Western historical narratives. The destruction of oral literature during colonialism created a gap that Nigerian scholars and cultural practitioners seek to fill. In this context, oral literature—encompassing myths, proverbs, songs, and oral histories— serves as a profound repository of knowledge about ethics, governance, and cosmology, integral to understanding precolonial Nigerian societies' cultural and intellectual foundations. The colonial focus on written records, often dismissing oral knowledge as inferior or primitive, resulted in an epistemic rupture that marginalised African heritage (Mahuika, 201).

Scholars like Sophie Oluwole (2014) have challenged colonial perceptions by affirming the intellectual rigour of African epistemologies. Oluwole's work on Yoruba philosophy, particularly her defence of Ifá divination, provides a critical framework for understanding African knowledge systems as intellectually sophisticated and philosophically robust. Ifá, like many African divinations, has often been dismissed by colonial scholars as superstitious or unscientific (Mahuika, 2019), (Luyaluka, 2016),(Weaver, 2018), Renowned Yoruba religion scholar Jacob Olupona, in his work *Rethinking the Study of African Indigenous Religions* (2021), corroborated this assertion and categorically criticised privileged European scholars such as James George Frazer and Edward B. Taylor for classifying Indigenous African religious practices as 'native', 'lower', 'primitive', and so on.

However, Oluwole reinterprets Ifá as a highly structured philosophical system that offers profound insights into governance, ethics, and cosmology. Her analysis directly challenges the colonial legacy of relegating African knowledge to the realm of mysticism, asserting that

indigenous epistemologies hold equal intellectual value to Western philosophical systems. Oluwole's reclamation of Ifá as a legitimate philosophical system exemplifies the broader decolonial project in Nigeria, where indigenous knowledge must be actively reintegrated into contemporary discourse.

Decolonising Nigerian heritage involves reconsidering governance models rooted in communal, participatory decision-making (Fasakin, 2021). Falola and Heaton (2022) highlight the importance of indigenous governance systems that historically operated on the principles of consensus and community involvement, which colonial rule disrupted by imposing centralised, hierarchical governance structures. The decolonisation of Nigerian political life, as argued by Táíwò (2022), requires not only the rejecting colonial systems but also the revitalisation of these indigenous systems in a way that adapts them to contemporary needs. This process involves seeing traditional governance as a dynamic, evolving resource that remains relevant in modern Nigerian society, offering alternative, community-based approaches to governance that prioritise collective decision-making and shared responsibility.

Decolonisation and heritage management have also been critical areas of engagement. Nomishan (2021) critiques the shortcomings of Nigerian cultural heritage policies, particularly the 1979 Cultural Heritage Decree, in adequately incorporating indigenous cultural practices into heritage preservation frameworks. Nomishan argues that heritage management in Nigeria must be decentralised to empower local communities to preserve and protect their cultural heritage. This perspective aligns with Táíwò's argument that decolonisation involves integrating Indigenous knowledge systems into contemporary policy structures, ensuring that heritage is not treated as a static relic but a living, evolving entity. From these assessment and arguments, we can deduce that for Nigeria, the decolonisation of heritage management requires recognising and revitalising

traditional systems that view cultural heritage as a dynamic, community-driven process. This approach ensures that local knowledge and practices are valued within national and international preservation strategies (Nwankwo, Agboeze, and Nwobi, 2018).

Decolonising Nigerian heritage and intellectual life demands more than just critiquing colonialism; it involves actively reimagining and revitalising indigenous knowledge systems. The works of Táíwò, Ngũgĩ, Oluwole, Nomishan, and Falola and Heaton (2022) demonstrate that this process is both intellectual and practical, encompassing the reclamation of oral traditions, governance models, and cultural heritage. In postcolonial Nigeria, decolonisation is not about returning to an idealised precolonial past but drawing from Indigenous knowledge systems to build a more inclusive and dynamic future. By critically engaging with orature, governance traditions, and cultural heritage, Nigeria can forge an intellectual and cultural future deeply rooted in its indigenous heritage while remaining connected to global knowledge traditions (Oloruntoba, Afolayan, and Yacob-Haliso, 2020).

1.4.2 Cultural Memory and the Role of Oral Literature

As Jan Assmann (1995) theorised, cultural memory plays a pivotal role in shaping collective identities and preserving heritage. Assmann distinguishes between communicative memory—the everyday memories shared within a community—and cultural memory, which spans generations and is safeguarded through cultural artefacts, rituals, and traditions. This theoretical framework is essential for understanding how Nigeria's rich oral literature functions as a dynamic vessel of cultural memory, preserving and transmitting collective experiences, norms, and histories. Expanding on this, Mamadou Diawara (1996) highlights the role of oral traditions in Africa as repositories of historical memory that often provide alternative perspectives to dominant, mainly colonial, narratives. Diawara argues that oral literature serves as a tool of resistance and

reclamation, enabling communities to assert their cultural autonomy and counteract historical erasure. As a mechanism for preserving cultural memory, Nigerian oral literature exemplifies this dynamic. The Hausa Bayajidda legend, deeply embedded in cultural tradition, recounts the heroic journey of a prince whose deeds symbolise the origins of Hausa identity (Ahmed, 2023). With its profound cultural impact, this legend highlights the power of oral literature in sustaining historical consciousness. Likewise, the Igbo *Tales by Moonlight* folktales, traditionally passed down in communal settings, function through repeated storytelling, reinforcing shared values and historical continuity. This aligns with aforementioned Assmann's (1995) concept of cultural memory, which explains how societies sustain identity by actively transmitting collective knowledge and traditions across generations (Ibeli, 2017).

These narratives not only preserve local histories but also challenge homogenised accounts of the past. Nigeria's oral literature encompasses diverse forms, including folktales, proverbs, songs, and epics (Akinyemi and Falola, 2021). Epics like the Hausa Bayajidda legend and the Igbo, Yoruba, Ibibio, Edo folktales, etc, exemplify how oral literature functions as a repository of cultural memory. The Bayajidda legend, for instance, recounts the story of a prince from Baghdad who becomes a hero in Hausa land by slaying a serpent and founding the Hausa states. This didactic legend serves as a foundational myth for the Hausa people, embedding historical and cultural values within its narrative. Similarly, Igbo folktales are rich in cultural and spiritual symbolism, preserving the history and values of the Igbo people, each imbued with cultural significance. These narratives are more than mere entertainment; they serve as educational tools, moral guides, and reservoirs of collective memory. For instance, folktales embed societal norms and spiritual beliefs within their stories, ensuring continuity across generations. Similarly, epic traditions like the Bayajidda saga, as rendered by (Ahmed,2023), encode historical events and

social hierarchies, cementing their importance within the cultural fabric (Hallam, 1966), (Salihu and James, 2024).

The interplay of Assmann's and Diawara's insights highlights how oral literature in Nigeria functions as both a repository and a constructor of cultural memory. While Assmann provides a theoretical lens to understand the longevity and structural significance of cultural memory, Diawara underscores the active role of oral traditions in shaping historical consciousness and challenging oppressive narratives. Together, these frameworks illuminate the multifaceted role of Nigerian oral literature in preserving cultural heritage and fostering identity (Abdullahi, 2024). These folktales often feature moral lessons and reflect the social norms and beliefs of the community, serving as a means of cultural transmission and identity formation. Jan Assmann's (1995) theories of cultural memory and Mamadou Diawara's (1996) work on historical memory in Africa provide a robust framework for understanding the role of Nigeria's oral literature in preserving cultural heritage, indigenous knowledge and shaping collective identities (Sone, 2018).

1.5 Foundational Key Thinkers on Nigeria's Oral Heritage

This section explores the contributions of foundational thinkers whose works have remained relevant in Nigerian oral literature and heritage studies, discourse, and context. Heritage, despite being a multidisciplinary study, key literary figures such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Amos Tutuola, Buchi Emecheta, etc have made significant contributions to Nigeria's oral heritage studies.

1.5.1 Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka: Relevance in Contemporary Nigerian Heritage Discourse.

Chinua Achebe: Literary Integration of Oral Traditions

Chinua Achebe's incorporation of Igbo oral literature into his novels demonstrates the depth and versatility of oral traditions in preserving and transmitting cultural heritage. His use of folktales, such as The Tortoise and the Birds in *Things Fall Apart* (1958), provides an ethical framework that reflects Igbo cosmology and social norms. Achebe regarded oral traditions as tools of resistance against colonial narratives, asserting that 'It is the storyteller who makes us what we are, who creates history' (Achebe, 1987, p. 124). This articulation positions storytelling as a cultural practice and an act of intellectual and historical sovereignty.

Achebe's approach aligns with the broader decolonial project of reclaiming marginalised epistemologies, a subject of enduring relevance in Nigerian heritage studies. Scholars such as Onyima (2016) build on Achebe's foundational insights, emphasising the importance of oral traditions in reconstructing African identities. Onyima critiques the commodification of heritage in Nigeria, arguing that oral histories and traditions must remain central to heritage management practices. Similarly, Uche-Okeke (2020) highlights the pedagogical potential of oral traditions in bridging generational divides and fostering cultural continuity. Achebe's contributions continue to serve as a model for how literature can preserve and reinterpret oral heritage within a modern framework.

1.5.2 Wole Soyinka: *Myth, Ritual, and Drama*

Wole Soyinka offers a complementary perspective by emphasising the performative and ritualistic dimensions of heritage. In plays such as *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), Soyinka integrates Yoruba myths and rituals to explore themes of communal responsibility, metaphysical balance, and cultural resilience. His concept of the 'Fourth Stage,' a metaphysical realm connecting the living, the dead, and the unborn, highlights the spiritual depth of Yoruba cosmology (Soyinka, 1976). This cyclical worldview challenges linear Western epistemologies,

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positioning Yoruba traditions as an alternative framework for understanding heritage and existence. Soyinka's works remain relevant to contemporary heritage studies, particularly in discussions on intangible cultural heritage. Onyima (2016) notes the ongoing neglect of rituals and festivals in Nigeria's heritage management policies, which often prioritise material artefacts over intangible practices. Soyinka's dramatisation of communal rituals emphasises the performative and participatory aspects of heritage, resonating with scholars advocating for a more holistic approach to cultural preservation. While modern academic voices focus on integrating policy and digital technologies, Soyinka's emphasis on ritual underscores the importance of sustaining living traditions as a dynamic force within Nigerian cultural life.

1.5.3 Contrasting Achebe and Soyinka with Contemporary Heritage Scholarship

Achebe and Soyinka's works contrast with the approaches of emerging scholars like Onyima (2016) and Okpoko (2020), who address the challenges of heritage management in Nigeria's rapidly changing socio-economic landscape. These scholars critique the disconnection between academic research and community-based heritage practices, advocating for inclusive and adaptive frameworks. For instance, Onyima underscores the role of community knowledge in heritage preservation, while Okpoko highlights the need for policy reforms that integrate Indigenous practices with contemporary methodologies. Despite these shifts, Achebe and Soyinka remain profoundly relevant. Achebe's focus on storytelling as a vehicle for cultural transmission offers a timeless model for documenting and preserving oral histories, especially as globalisation threatens the survival of local languages and narratives (Sazzad, 2020). Soyinka's exploration of ritual as a communal and spiritual practice complements these efforts by emphasising heritage's active, performative aspects. Together, their works remind contemporary scholars of the need to

balance technological and policy innovations with the intrinsic values embedded in Nigeria's intangible heritage.

1.5.4 Relevance in the Current Nigerian Heritage Context

Integrating Achebe and Soyinka's insights into modern Nigerian heritage studies highlights their enduring relevance in addressing contemporary challenges. Scholars such as Falola and Heaton (2022) argue that effective heritage management must move beyond preserving artefacts to engaging with local communities' lived experiences and epistemologies. Achebe and Soyinka's works provide a blueprint for this approach, demonstrating how oral traditions and rituals can serve as repositories of historical knowledge and frameworks for cultural resilience. Their contributions also resonate with global efforts to decolonise heritage studies. Onyima (2016) and Nomishan (2021) emphasise the importance of community-centred heritage practices prioritising Indigenous knowledge systems. These perspectives align with Achebe's insistence on storytelling as history and Soyinka's portrayal of ritual as a dynamic cultural force. While contemporary scholarship introduces new methodologies and interdisciplinary frameworks, Achebe and Soyinka's foundational insights continue to enrich these discussions, ensuring that Nigerian heritage studies remain grounded in the values and philosophies of the communities they represent. Achebe and Soyinka's integration of oral traditions into their literary and dramatic works underscores their lasting relevance to Nigerian heritage discourse. Their approaches, though distinct, complement contemporary efforts to decolonise heritage studies and prioritise indigenous knowledge systems. By contrasting their contributions with the work of newer scholars such as Onyima and Okpoko, it becomes clear that Achebe and Soyinka remain critical to understanding and addressing the challenges of preserving Nigeria's cultural heritage in a rapidly globalising world. Their legacies

remind us that heritage is not merely about preserving the past but also about sustaining the living traditions that define and guide Nigeria's cultural identity.

Other works by these resurgent thinkers revolve around Amos Tutuola and the modernisation of folklore. Tutuola's works (1952), characterised by their reliance on Yoruba folktales, bridge traditional oral forms and modern literary structures. His narratives, such as *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952), which follows an unnamed protagonist on a fantastical journey to find his deceased palm-wine tapper, illustrate the adaptability of Nigeria's oral traditions in contemporary contexts. By intertwining fantastical elements with everyday life, Tutuola captures the essence of oral storytelling while adding new layers of meaning and accessibility. His work exemplifies how traditional stories can be reimagined for modern audiences, ensuring their continued relevance. The interpretation and adaptation of oral narratives remain crucial in preserving cultural heritage while promoting more inclusive literary representations.

1.6 Challenges to Oral Heritage Preservation in Nigeria

Oral traditions in Nigeria have long served as repositories of cultural identity, historical knowledge, and moral values. However, these traditions face significant challenges, including the lingering effects of colonial legacies, cultural erosion, and the disruptions brought by modernity. This literature review critically engages with scholarly works on the resilience and transformation of Nigeria's oral heritage, focusing on the interplay between storytelling, moral education, and cultural preservation. Drawing on studies by Akingbe, Adeniyi, and Ighile (2021) and Eze, Okonkwo, Eke, Eze-Aruah, and Ukaogo (2021), it applies Afrocentricity as a theoretical framework to interrogate the preservation of oral traditions in contemporary Nigeria.

Colonial legacies significantly shaped the trajectory of Nigeria's oral traditions. The colonial education system prioritised literacy in European languages, devaluing indigenous oral forms of communication and knowledge. Ekeh's (1975) theory of the 'two publics' captures the marginalisation of the indigenous cultural sphere, wherein oral traditions were confined to a subordinate role in society. Akingbe, Adeniyi, and Ighile (2021) argue that this systemic devaluation disrupted the transmission of oral storytelling, with far-reaching implications for moral education among the youth. They emphasise that storytelling was not merely a form of entertainment but a critical medium for imparting societal values and norms. Eze et al. (2021) offer a complementary perspective, highlighting the historical resilience of oral artists who have adapted their practices to survive cultural and technological shifts. These adaptations demonstrate the dynamic nature of oral traditions, which have historically navigated colonial oppression and modern disruptions. However, the authors caution that the resilience of these traditions does not guarantee their continuity, mainly as modernity accelerates cultural homogenisation and erodes communal structures that sustain oral practices.

A critical literary theme is storytelling's moral and educational function within Nigerian oral traditions. Akingbe et al. (2021) emphasise that storytelling historically served as a moral compass, transmitting ethical values through narrative structures deeply embedded in communal settings. The authors argue that the decline of storytelling traditions correlates with a moral decline among Nigerian youth, who increasingly lack access to these cultural resources. This perspective aligns with Afrocentricity's call to reclaim indigenous practices as vital components of cultural and moral education. In contrast, Eze et al. (2021) focus on the adaptability of oral artists as a testament to the enduring relevance of oral traditions. While acknowledging the challenges posed by modernity, they highlight how oral traditions have historically integrated new media and

technological advancements to reach broader audiences. This adaptability underscores the potential for oral traditions to coexist with, rather than be eclipsed by modern forms of communication. However, the authors caution that adaptation must not compromise authenticity, as storytelling's performative and communal aspects are integral to its cultural and moral functions. The erosion of oral traditions is further exacerbated by the displacement of Indigenous cultural practices in favour of Westernised forms of education and entertainment. Ekeh's framework of the 'two publics' is instrumental in analysing this displacement, as it illustrates how colonial and postcolonial policies have entrenched a cultural dichotomy that marginalises indigenous practices. Akingbe et al. (2021) argue that efforts to revive storytelling must address this structural marginalisation by integrating oral traditions into both formal and informal education systems. This approach reclaims storytelling as a cultural and moral resource and reinforces its role in fostering national identity and cohesion.

The literature review highlights modernity as both a challenge and an opportunity for oral heritage preservation. Eze et al. (2021) highlight the creative ways oral artists have embraced modern media, such as radio and digital platforms, to sustain their practices. However, they warn that technological adaptation must be accompanied by efforts to preserve the core elements of oral traditions, including their interactive and communal dimensions. This tension between preservation and innovation reflects broader debates within Afrocentricity about navigating modernity while maintaining cultural authenticity. Preserving Nigeria's oral heritage requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both the structural legacies of colonialism and the contemporary challenges of modernity. The works of Akingbe, Adeniyi, and Ighile (2021) and Eze et al. (2021) underscore the importance of reclaiming oral traditions as dynamic and adaptable elements of Nigeria's cultural identity. This review emphasises the need to centre Indigenous

practices in national cultural policies and education systems through an Afrocentricity lens, ensuring that oral traditions remain a vital part of Nigeria's heritage and moral framework.

1.7 Contrasting Feminist Perspectives: Nwapa, Emecheta, and Oluwole

Feminist reinterpretations of Nigerian oral traditions offer a transformative lens through which to examine gender inequalities. Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* (1966) is a powerful example of this, weaving Igbo folklore into the narrative to depict a woman, Efuru, who achieves economic independence and spiritual transcendence without conforming to traditional domestic roles. By aligning Efuru with the Uhamiri goddess, Nwapa challenges patriarchal expectations and positions her protagonist within an alternative framework of female agency. This strategic reworking of folklore disrupts rigid gender binaries and critiques the exclusion of women from authoritative cultural spaces, demonstrating the transformative potential of Nigerian heritage in shaping gender discourses.

Similarly, Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) presents a more explicit interrogation of how oral traditions have historically reinforced gendered economic structures that commodify women's bodies. Through the trajectory of Nnu Ego, whose identity and worth are tethered to reproductive success, Emecheta illustrates how traditional Igbo motherhood ideals become untenable under colonial capitalism. The text's critical juxtaposition of precolonial and colonial Nigeria exposes how the valorisation of motherhood—often upheld in oral narratives—can entrap women within exploitative socio-economic roles. Emecheta's work is not merely a critique of tradition but an urgent call for its radical transformation, demanding that oral narratives evolve to reflect the lived realities of modern African women and remain relevant within Nigeria's evolving heritage.

Conversely, Sophie Oluwole (2014) offers a markedly different perspective that is both enlightening and empowering. She asserts that Yoruba oral traditions inherently promote gender balance. Her analysis of the *Odu Ifá* corpus highlights the philosophical sophistication of Yoruba cosmology, wherein male and female deities, such as Orunmila and Osun, possess complementary spiritual authority. Oluwole argues that Western feminist discourses often dismiss indigenous knowledge systems as inherently patriarchal, failing to recognise that African epistemologies, when examined holistically, offer alternative paradigms for conceptualising gender equity. She provides compelling evidence that Yoruba traditions, rather than reinforcing male dominance, embed principles of balance and reciprocity, offering an indigenous model of gender relations that predates colonial influences. By reclaiming these traditions, Oluwole demonstrates how Nigerian heritage contains the tools for addressing contemporary gender inequalities, thus affirming the relevance of oral traditions in shaping progressive gender discourse.

Ifi Amadiume (1987) provides a necessary counterpoint, cautioning against an overly romanticised reading of precolonial gender relations. While acknowledging the fluidity of gender roles in many African societies—exemplified by the Igbo practice of women taking on social and economic roles as heads of households and lineage bearers—Amadiume warns that uncritical idealisation risks overlooking the material conditions that sustain gendered power imbalances. Similarly, Alakwe (2018) argues that while oral traditions are valuable cultural repositories, their preservation must be accompanied by a rigorous reassessment to prevent the perpetuation of outdated and oppressive norms. For example, the continued recitation of proverbs such as 'Nwanyị bụ ihe nwoke ji aga mba' (A woman is what a man takes along when he travels) (Igbo Proverb, n.d.) reinforces male dominance in decision-making and mobility, highlighting the necessity of

critical engagement with these narratives to ensure they evolve alongside Nigeria's broader cultural heritage.

By integrating these diverse perspectives, this thesis adopts a balanced approach, neither categorically rejecting oral traditions as irredeemably patriarchal nor uncritically endorsing them as intrinsically feminist. Instead, it positions Nigerian oral literature as a contested space where resistance, complicity, transformation, and tradition coexist. This study contributes to African feminist scholarship by advocating for a balanced yet critical engagement with indigenous knowledge systems. Nnaemeka's (2004) concept of Nego-Feminism, which foregrounds negotiation and pragmatism in African gender discourse, provides a crucial theoretical framework for understanding how oral traditions can be reinterpreted to align with contemporary struggles for gender justice. By anchoring this analysis within the broader framework of Nigerian heritage, the study highlights the enduring significance of oral traditions as living, evolving cultural artefacts that shape and reflect gender dynamics within Nigeria's historical and contemporary contexts.

1.8 Conclusion

This thesis situates Nigeria's oral heritage as both a cultural foundation and a dynamic force for addressing contemporary challenges. Through the lenses of Afrocentricity, decolonisation, and cultural memory, it underscores oral traditions as vital for reclaiming African agency, shaping identity, and fostering resilience in postcolonial Nigeria. Engaging with seminal and contemporary thinkers demonstrates how oral traditions preserve collective memory while addressing socio-political challenges, reinforcing their continued relevance in a rapidly evolving world.

Adaptive and inclusive preservation strategies are paramount, particularly in response to economic inequality, globalisation, and cultural commodification. Oral traditions must evolve to

remain meaningful for future generations, not as relics of the past but as active instruments of cultural continuity and social engagement.

In alignment with the thesis's research aims, this study examines Nollywood storytelling as a conduit for Nigerian heritage, illustrating its role in transmitting cultural memory and shaping national identity. While acknowledging its financial and ethical constraints, this discussion situates Nollywood within broader theoretical paradigms, reinforcing its significance in cultural preservation, its potential for global recognition, and its capacity to bridge cultural divides. This framework establishes the foundation for further analyses of Nollywood's storytelling strategies and their broader cultural impact.

Chapter Two

2 Methodology

2.1 Introduction

Dawson (2019, pp. 1–5) highlights the distinction between methodology—the overarching research philosophy—and methods, the specific tools used for data collection. This study adopts a qualitative methodology, employing semi-structured interviews with Nollywood filmmakers and audiences to examine Nigerian heritage transmission and reinterpretation. For instance, interviews with veteran directors explore how traditional folklore is adapted into a film, preserving cultural memory. The research investigates how Nollywood storytelling advances Nigerian heritage by connecting practitioner and audience experiences to broader cultural practices. Nollywood films integrate indigenous languages, proverbs, and rituals, reinforcing historical consciousness (Oguamanam, 2020, pp. 518–545). Films like *Kurunmi* (2020) and *Ekpebiwo M* (2024) reinterpret cultural narratives, exemplifying cinema's role in sustaining heritage.

The study employs ontological and phenomenological perspectives. Doer (2009, pp. 463–486) views heritage as dynamic rather than static, which is evident in how Nollywood reframes oral traditions. Smith (2006, p. 29) argues that heritage is actively shaped by cultural expressions and collective memory, as seen in films about the Biafran War, which continuously engage national identity. Ontological inquiry interrogates how heritage is created, adapted, and experienced within Nigerian discourse. Phenomenology (Husserl, 1970, p. 123; Heidegger, 1962, p. 45) further reveals how individuals internalise and articulate cultural identities through embodied experiences. Smith and Waterton (2012, p. 78) align with this, emphasising that heritage

is negotiated through human agency and meaning-making, involving both conscious and subconscious processes.

The study adopts interpretive epistemology, prioritising understanding over-explanation. Geertz's (1973) *thick description* unpacks cultural meanings, while Harrison's (2021) emphasises subjectivity in heritage perception. This aligns with qualitative methods such as interviews, facilitating an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives (Ayeni, Dada, and Ale, 2024, pp. 1–23). Indigenous knowledge systems are central to collective identity (Onibere, 2023, pp. 1–45). Although primarily qualitative, the study integrates polls and questionnaires to complement insights, capturing broader perceptions (Berger, 2018, p. 187). Pilcher and Cortazzi (2023) argue for the compatibility of qualitative and quantitative methods to enrich research insights. Onyima (2016) asserts that combining multiple tools deepens cultural studies' understanding of Nigerian heritage.

The study gathers data through interviews, surveys, and polls, ensuring the representation of both cultural creators and audiences. Ethical approval for the research, including polls, interviews and questionnaires, was obtained and granted by the ethics committee of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. A template of the approved ethical approval form is attached (See Figure 20). This ethical compliance reinforces the study's commitment to international research standards and aligns with UNESCO's (2024) Ethical Principles for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage, which stress respect, transparency, and cultural sensitivity. A holistic methodological approach (Mason, 2018) considers interconnections between cultural, historical, and societal dimensions, capturing the dynamic interplay of identity and collective memory. Integrating qualitative insights with contextual data ensures a comprehensive understanding of

heritage as an evolving phenomenon (Walter, 2020, pp. 126–138), reinforcing the interdisciplinary nature of heritage studies.

2.2 Research Design

This study delves into the vibrant world of Nollywood, focusing on its deeply ingrained Nigerian heritage and pioneering storytelling methods. As Nweze et al. (2025) rightly pointed out, Nollywood's narrative techniques are not just instrumental, but pivotal in preserving and evolving Nigerian heritage. These innovative storytelling methods, far from being mere tools, are the very essence of Nollywood's profound impact on engaging with social and political themes. The choice of a qualitative research design is particularly significant, as it enables a comprehensive exploration of Nollywood's storytelling practices and their profound impact on cultural identity. Zhang et al. (2023, p. 139) endorse qualitative research in heritage studies, underlining its effectiveness in the in-depth examination of cultural heritage and oral traditions. This approach ensures a robust methodological foundation, allowing for an intricate understanding of Nollywood's contributions to cultural preservation and identity formation.

The qualitative research framework, particularly suited to this study, aligns with its focus on Nollywood's cultural significance. It allows for a nuanced exploration of the intersections between culture, identity, and innovation, facilitating a deep understanding of how Nollywood preserves, reflects, and reimagines Nigerian traditions and values. Unlike quantitative approaches that may overlook cultural nuances, qualitative methods prioritise the richness of subjective narratives, ensuring interpretations remain authentic and contextually grounded. As Hansen and Kronberger (2014, pp. 418–434) highlight, cultural context plays a crucial role in shaping data and its interpretations, further justifying the primacy of qualitative methods in this research.

The research employs primary sources, including interviews, polls, and questionnaires, to gather data from industry stakeholders such as directors, producers, actors, and audiences. These tools provide insights into Nollywood's cultural preservation and heritage transmission contributions. Interviews offer nuanced insights into industry challenges, including funding limitations, distribution constraints, and regulatory hurdles, while integrated quantitative tools, such as polls and questionnaires, capture broader audience and industry perceptions. Apaydin (2018, pp. 1–7) highlights that interviews provide detailed insights into industry professionals' specific experiences in heritage studies, reinforcing the appropriateness of this method.

Additionally, secondary sources comprising scholarly literature on Nigerian and international heritage studies complement the primary data. Nigerian publications provide essential local context, while global heritage studies offer comparative insights, situating Nollywood within broader cultural preservation discussions. This dual approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of Nollywood as a medium for cultural expression, identity reinforcement, and memory preservation (Aguoru, 2023, pp. 201–222). By employing this methodological pluralism, as advocated by Pilcher and Cortazzi (2023), the research bridges the depth of qualitative inquiry with the breadth of quantitative analysis, ensuring both granular and holistic insights into Nollywood's impact.

The study's qualitative approach captures the realities of Nollywood in real-world settings, facilitating robust, contextualised data collection and analysis (Morse, 2020, pp. 1–7). This method aligns with the FINERMAPS framework, which ensures feasibility, interest, novelty, ethics, relevance, manageability, appropriateness, parsimony, and systematicity in research (Trac, 2019, p. 75). Ethical considerations, including participant confidentiality and informed consent, are integral to the study, ensuring research integrity and reliability. Furthermore, systematicity

guarantees that data collection and analysis processes are replicable and methodologically sound, as Lund et al. emphasise (2022, pp. 1–17).

By employing a rigorous qualitative framework supported by primary and secondary sources, this research comprehensively understands Nollywood's storytelling techniques and their role in Nigerian heritage (Folorunsho, 2024, pp. 19–37). The research design ensures actionable insights that advance academic discourse and inform cultural policy, positioning Nollywood as a critical medium for cultural preservation and identity reinforcement. More than that, it situates Nollywood within Afrocentric frameworks and global heritage studies, advancing the field of heritage studies and demonstrating its essential role in shaping African cultural identity. Demiju-Bepo and Idyo (2023) stress the significance of preserving cultural heritage, highlighting Nollywood's indispensable role in maintaining Nigeria's cultural tapestry.

Ultimately, this study contributes valuable insights to academic discourse and practical applications by integrating qualitative and holistic methodologies. The research findings can inform cultural policy and industry practices, reinforcing Nollywood's role as a dynamic cultural repository. By bridging the gap between cultural practice and academic scholarship, this study enhances heritage studies while advancing understanding of Nollywood's profound influence on Nigerian identity and global cultural exchange.

2.3 Data Processing and Coding

The data analysis in this study was meticulously conducted manually, a deliberate methodological choice aimed at achieving a nuanced and in-depth interpretation of themes and insights pertinent to Nollywood's role in cultural heritage preservation. This rigorous approach facilitated the meticulous processing of data from interviews, surveys, and polls as primary

materials, alongside film analysis as a secondary resource. The manual coding process allowed the researcher to immerse deeply in the data, identifying intricate patterns, subtle interconnections, and emergent themes that automated methods might overlook (Saldaña, 2021, p. 45).

The preparatory phase commenced with an exhaustive transcription process. Audio-visual recordings from interviews conducted via the University Microsoft Teams platform, a widely used communication tool in academic settings involving key Nollywood stakeholders, such as directors, actors, and producers, were first downloaded. Although Teams provided an auto-generated transcription, this was meticulously reviewed and manually corrected to rectify errors and omissions. A significant focus was placed on cultural terms, vernacular expressions, and nuanced phrases, which automated tools frequently misinterpret or omit. The process required repeated listening and cross-referencing to ensure accuracy and authenticity in representation.

Survey responses were systematically organised into structured documents to facilitate subsequent analysis. Additionally, films selected as case studies—such as *Things Fall Apart* (1987), *Living in Bondage* (1992), and *Amina* (2021)—were chosen for their significant cultural impact and their representation of key themes in Nollywood. These films were subjected to a detailed review involving summarising critical aspects such as linguistic choices, symbolic representations, and thematic narratives, which were subsequently structured into analytic graphs and tables for clarity and comparative analysis.

A hybrid coding framework was devised, integrating deductive and inductive methodologies to ensure a comprehensive thematic exploration. The deductive approach entailed the pre-definition of codes based on established theoretical frameworks, including the theories of Afrocentrism (Mazama, 2001), Decolonisation (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986), and Authorised

Heritage Discourse (Smith, 2006). These predefined codes encompassed key themes such as 'Afrocentric narratives,' 'intangible heritage,' and 'decolonial storytelling'. Complementing this, the inductive approach enabled the identification of emergent themes arising organically from the data, including 'digital heritage challenges' and 'policy inadequacies.' Integrating both approaches ensured a dynamic and flexible analytical framework that accommodated pre-existing theoretical constructs and novel insights, instilling confidence in the theoretical foundation of the research.

The manual coding process was meticulous and structured, following three primary phases. Open coding involved a broad review of transcripts, survey responses, and film analyses to identify key ideas. For instance, references to traditional storytelling techniques were categorised under the code 'oral tradition,' while financial discussions were assigned to 'financial constraints.' The second phase, axial coding, established connections between these broad categories. For example, 'oral tradition' was directly linked to 'Afrocentric narratives,' demonstrating how Nollywood films reinforce cultural identity through storytelling. Similarly, 'financial constraints' were associated with 'piracy,' highlighting the industry's economic challenges. Finally, selective coding distilled the most salient themes, focusing on Nollywood's cultural preservation impact and the industry's pressing challenges.

The coding process used physical materials, including printed transcripts, colour-coded markers, and index cards, to enhance analytical rigour. Marginal notes were systematically added to capture interpretative insights and reflections, fostering an iterative and reflexive engagement with the data. This method ensured a thorough review of all materials, mitigating the risk of overlooking critical information.

Once the data was coded, it was categorised into overarching themes and cross-referenced with the theoretical frameworks guiding the study. This thematic analysis enabled the identification of patterns and trends that reinforced the research objectives. For instance, *Living in Bondage* (1992) exemplifies the intersection of oral tradition with Afrocentric narratives, while *Amina* (2021) highlights the evolving portrayal of women in Nollywood, resonating with contemporary gender discourse.

The findings were then synthesised into coherent narratives aligned with the study's objectives. To enhance clarity and engagement, direct quotes from questionnaire respondents were incorporated to vividly illustrate key points. Additionally, film examples provided concrete substantiation of thematic discussions. Visual aids—including film stills, summary tables, and thematic diagrams—further enhanced comprehension and presentation. This multi-faceted approach, combining manual data processing with theoretical rigor, facilitated a deep engagement with the material, allowing for a robust interpretation of Nollywood's role in preserving Nigerian cultural heritage while addressing its challenges (Adu, 2019, p. 36).

The table below (See Figure 9) presents a structured synthesis of manually coded data, summarizing key themes and insights from the analysis of Nollywood's role in cultural heritage preservation. It distills complex findings into clear patterns, helping readers identify relationships within the industry.

Each theme—such as financial constraints, Afrocentrism, decolonisation, and oral traditions—represents a critical category from the coding process. The insights illustrate their impact; for example, financial constraints affect production quality and market access, while oral traditions highlight Nollywood's role in preserving cultural knowledge.

Enhancing the textual discussion, the table serves as a quick-reference overview, reinforces the theoretical framework, and highlights both opportunities (such as global reach via streaming) and challenges (such as piracy and policy issues). It exemplifies the study's analytical rigor by linking raw data to thematic interpretation.

General Patterns Identified from Coding

Theme	Refined Insights
Afrocentrism	Nollywood promotes African identity by showcasing indigenous narratives and challenging colonial legacies.
Challenges in Heritage Promotion	Issues like piracy, inadequate funding, and lack of institutional infrastructure limit Nollywood's role in heritage preservation.
Decolonisation	The industry reclaims African voices, offering counter-narratives to colonial portrayals and redefining African identity.
Digital Platforms and Technology	Streaming services enhance Nollywood's accessibility, though piracy and financial sustainability remain challenges.
Financial Constraints	Financial limitations restrict Nollywood's ability to scale, affecting production quality and access to international markets.
Global Impact	Nollywood's global reach reshapes international perceptions of African culture, especially through platforms like Netflix.
Intangible Heritage	The industry preserves intangible heritage by incorporating folklore, oral traditions, and communal rituals into storytelling.
Oral Traditions and Storytelling	Nollywood's reliance on oral storytelling techniques ensures the transmission of cultural knowledge and history across generations.

Policy and Institutional Issues	Censorship, regulatory gaps, and lack of archival systems hinder Nollywood's growth and its ability to preserve cultural heritage.
Cultural Appropriation	Global filmmakers often use Nigerian cultural symbols, rituals, and aesthetics without context or consent, turning heritage into spectacle and undermining authentic representation.

Figure 9: General Patterns Identified from Coding (Author's work, 2024).

2.4 Research Methods

This section outlines the qualitative methodologies employed in reviewing and analysing Nollywood films, forming the analytical foundation for Chapter 3 of this thesis. The approach integrates several complementary frameworks—content analysis, thematic analysis, narrative analysis, visual analysis, and ethnographic analysis. These methods collectively offer a robust structure for examining the cultural, social, and artistic dimensions of Nollywood cinema, drawing on recent academic contributions, cultural film studies, and primary data from questionnaires. Each methodology extracts distinct yet interrelated insights into the films' construction and societal implications.

2.4.1 Analytical Framework: Nollywood Film Review

The methodological approach combines multiple qualitative analyses to evaluate Nollywood films comprehensively. This framework, with its comprehensive nature, enables a nuanced understanding of filmic elements, thematic structures, storytelling techniques, visual aesthetics, and cultural contexts. Content analysis examines structural elements such as dialogue, cinematography, character development, and narrative structure to uncover embedded cultural and

societal messages. The thematic analysis identifies and interprets recurring motifs that reflect social, cultural, and psychological themes. Narrative analysis investigates storytelling techniques and structures to understand their role in shaping meaning and audience engagement. Visual analysis explores cinematographic elements, mise-en-scène, editing, and symbolism to reveal aesthetic and semiotic dimensions. Ethnographic analysis contextualises films within broader cultural and social frameworks, highlighting their reflection of and impact on audiences.

2.4.2 Content and Thematic Analysis

Content analysis systematically dissects film components to identify patterns and underlying meanings. This method scrutinises elements such as dialogue, characterisation, and narrative structure to extract insights into the broader societal and cultural messages embedded within Nollywood films. Scholars such as Martin and Shohat (2020) emphasise content analysis's significance in understanding global cinema's evolving narrative landscapes. In Africa, Barber (2015) highlights its utility in decoding visual media's cultural relevance.

While closely related, thematic analysis focuses on identifying and interpreting recurring themes within the films. This approach, known for its flexibility and rigor, elucidates motifs such as postcolonial identity, gender dynamics, and socio-economic aspirations, central to Nollywood storytelling. Braun and Clarke (2021) advocate for thematic analysis as a tool that can flexibly yet rigorously explore multi-layered narratives, making it particularly suited to the complexity of Nollywood's storytelling tradition.

2.4.3 Narrative and Visual Analysis

Narrative analysis delves into the storytelling techniques employed in Nollywood films, examining plot structures, character arcs, and temporal sequencing. This method provides profound insights into how filmmakers craft engaging and culturally resonant narratives. Bordwell (2022) and Nwanze (2021) underscore the importance of narrative analysis in understanding how cinematic storytelling reflects and shapes cultural consciousness, enlightening us about the deeper implications of Nollywood films.

Visual analysis, in turn, focuses on the film's aesthetic and semiotic aspects. It investigates cinematography, mise-en-scène, editing, and symbolic representations, revealing how visual techniques contribute to storytelling and audience engagement. Dahl (2004) and Ekwuazi (2023) discuss how African filmmakers navigate local and global aesthetic paradigms, crafting distinctive visual languages that define Nollywood's cinematic identity.

2.4.4 Ethnographic Analysis

Ethnographic analysis situates Nollywood films within their broader cultural and social contexts, assessing how they reflect and influence the values, beliefs, and practices of their audience. Given Nollywood's pivotal role as a cultural mirror and a site of ideological negotiation, this method provides critical insights into its societal impact. Haynes (2016) and Ugochukwu (2023) explore how Nollywood serves as a cultural artefact, articulating and challenging social norms within Nigerian society. Importantly, Nollywood can be understood as a significant repository and interpreter of Nigerian cultural experience, offering a lens through which identity and ideology are negotiated—one that both reflects and interrogates the social norms embedded within Nigerian society. Their analyses position Nollywood as a space where dominant narratives are contested and alternative perspectives are voiced, often through storylines that grapple with

issues such as gender roles, generational tensions, and moral dilemmas. Crucially, Nollywood operates as a living archive and interpretive medium of Nigerian cultural experience, shaping and reshaping collective understandings of identity, belonging, and ideology. Through its prolific output and broad reach, it offers audiences a lens through which cultural values are affirmed, challenged, and reimagined.

By integrating these methodologies, this section demonstrates how the study achieves a comprehensive analysis of Nollywood cinema, avoiding repetition while ensuring a fluid and logical progression of ideas.

2.5 Participant Selection

The approach for selecting industry-knowledgeable participants in this research ensures that the researcher acquires the most relevant information and secures reliable data that precisely aligns with the research question, enhancing the study's credibility. This research aligns with Mocănașu (2020, p.181), emphasising that an adequate participant pool is essential for research quality. Therefore, this qualitative and holistic study employs interviews, quantitative questionnaires, and opinion polls to gather comprehensive data. The participant groups are as follows:

2.5.1 Industry Expert Selection

All participants in this study, representing diverse ethnic groups, genders, and age ranges, were selected primarily for their expertise and Nollywood experience. This ensures a credible and in-depth exploration of the industry's challenges, Nigerian heritage practices, and storytelling techniques. This approach, in line with Stratton (2024, pp. 121-122), underlines the cost-effectiveness and convenience of selecting individuals with relevant knowledge, thereby enhancing the depth and credibility of the research.

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The participant pool was diverse, including a variety of roles within the Nollywood industry, such as filmmakers, directors, producers, scriptwriters, and actors. Some actors also served as cultural experts, contributing scholarly knowledge and specialised insights into Nigerian culture and Nollywood's heritage practices. While this selection method does not encompass the entire population and may introduce potential bias due to researcher subjectivity, measures were taken to maintain professional neutrality throughout the research process, mitigating these concerns.

2.5.2 Snowball and Self-Selection Approach

Given the nature of the research, participants were identified through a snowball selection and self-selection process rather than systematic sampling. Industry professionals were approached based on their prominence and experience within Nollywood, with additional participants recommended by initial interviewees (See Figure 10) for a complete list and relevant details. This method aligns with Patton (2002, p.4), who acknowledges that such an approach broadens the study's scope by incorporating diverse perspectives and enriching the findings.

While efforts were made to recruit participants from diverse ethnic backgrounds across Nigeria, the study's participant pool primarily comprised professionals from Yoruba, Igbo, Edo, Efik, and Anioma tribes. Notably, Hausa—one of Nigeria's three major ethnic groups—was notably underrepresented. Although outreach efforts were made, few Hausa filmmakers actively engaged with mainstream Nollywood, as many operate within Kannywood, the Hausa-language film industry discussed in the thesis introduction. This limitation may impact the diversity of perspectives on how different cultural contexts influence storytelling and heritage preservation. Consequently, the findings may not fully capture the breadth of experiences across Nigeria's cultural landscape.

Survey participants targeted upcoming actors and crew members who, though knowledgeable, do not usually have the opportunity to air their views. They were specifically selected to achieve diverse ideas and perspectives. These participants were contacted via email; while some responded, others did not. They, as much as the experts, were contacted through the writer's industry network, which played a crucial role in, making the process less cumbersome. The researcher's extensive coverage of Nollywood professionally as a journalist also helped in this process.

Participants Profile

Name	Occupation
Adebayo Bankole **(aka Boy Alinco)**	Actor
Adedamola Jones Adedayo	Film Journalist/Filmmaker
Aja Nnanna Lekwa	Filmmaker/Director
Chales Chijoke Cephas	Filmmaker/Screenwriter
Francisca Nnenna Nwojiji	Actor/Screenwriter
Friday Francis	Actor
Ifeoma Jennifer Elechi	Filmmaker/Screenwriter/Actor/Spoken word poet
John Chizoba Vincent	Film Director
Jovial James	Actor/Screenwriter
Oluyomi Mactaiwo	Art Director/Production Designer/Production Manager/Film Researcher/Producer/Screenwriter
Stlivingstone Ekanem	Film Director/Actor

Figure 10: Consented De-anonymised Participants Profile.

Interviews:

Number of Interviews: 11

This study adopts a rigorous semi-structured interview approach to elicit participants' unique perspectives, essential for a nuanced interpretation of the investigated phenomena (Alamri, 2019, p. 65). This methodological approach ensures the data's validity and reliability, reinforcing confidence in the research findings.

Nollywood practitioners, selected (See Figure 10), were interviewed to provide a comprehensive understanding of its dynamics. The interviews were conducted via recorded team meetings on the University platform, each lasting one to two hours. The researcher, drawing on expertise in qualitative methodologies, acted as a neutral facilitator, guiding and ensuring that each interview stayed on track and covered all necessary topics. This structured format facilitated systematic comparison, minimised potential biases, and enhanced response consistency. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analysed for comprehensive data capture.

The interview questions were meticulously designed to cover a wide range of areas, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the Nollywood industry. These areas included narrative structures, audience engagement, financial constraints, international reach, costume interpretations, gender representation, linguistic choices, Nigerian cultural heritage, and regulatory frameworks. Furthermore, discussions on industry regulations, professional guilds, governmental policies, and technological advancements provided a holistic perspective on Nollywood's structural and creative landscape.

Data saturation, a recognised benchmark for reliability in qualitative research, was the guiding principle for the number of interviews conducted. This point was reached when additional

interviews ceased to yield novel themes, indicating a comprehensive understanding of the Nollywood industry. After 11 in-depth interviews, saturation was achieved, aligning with established research indicating that 10–12 interviews typically suffice in specialised fields (Shaw and Holland, 2014, p. 87; Staller, 2021, pp. 897–904). The carefully designed interview questions elicited detailed and insightful responses, thereby ensuring the study's methodological rigour.

Questionnaires:

Number of Respondents: 32

As Patten (2019, pp. 1-3) asserts, questionnaires serve as an effective method for anonymous data collection, enabling participants to express their opinions freely without concern for professional repercussions. This is particularly relevant given that most respondents, in contrast to interviewees, were emerging practitioners in the Nollywood industry, primarily comprising crew members and artists. Their feedback, represented by pseudonyms such as Nolly01, Nolly10, Nolly15, and so on, plays a significant role in shaping the industry.

The questionnaire (See Figure 21) was distributed via the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UTWSD) Outlook email system, accommodating the nomadic schedules of crew members and artists. This method was especially effective in film locations with poor internet connectivity, ensuring all contacted individuals had the opportunity to participate. Signed consent was obtained before distribution, and completed questionnaires were returned through the same email system. This approach not only ensured accessibility for participants on the move but also expanded the data pool by engaging knowledgeable individuals willing to offer additional insights. The diverse perspectives of the 32 respondents, all open to follow-up questions, enriched the study and provided a comprehensive understanding of the Nollywood industry.

The questionnaire was carefully designed to capture a range of perspectives, including audience reception and Nollywood's impact on Nigerian heritage. It allowed individuals involved in or familiar with Nollywood to express points of agreement and disagreement regarding the industry's current structure.

With 32 responses, a balance between comprehensiveness and manageability was achieved, ensuring a thorough exploration of diverse viewpoints. This thoroughness strengthens the research's depth and provides a solid foundation for further investigation, reinforcing confidence in its rigour. Including open-ended questions further enriched the analysis, allowing participants to elaborate on their perspectives and offering more profound insights into the broader landscape.

Polls:

Number of Respondents: 262

According to Bethlehem (2011, pp. 1-12), the advantages of polls include their ability to help us understand and gauge public sentiment, which is particularly helpful in assessing fans' approval ratings of Nollywood. Reactions from Nollywood fans regarding the industry's functionalities were largely positive. In terms of distribution, the poll was created using Google Forms and shared with over 6,000 followers on the writer's password-protected Facebook and Twitter accounts. Access requires a PIN sent to a linked mobile device. The number of poll respondents is substantial, contributing to statistical validity. While this is not a strictly quantitative study, the results offer valuable insight into public perceptions of the Nollywood industry. Furthermore, the respondents represent a diverse range of Nigerian ethnicities, including diaspora members, which helps limit selection bias and ensures a broad representation of audience sentiment. This enhances the study's representativeness and ensures a broader perspective. The

opinion polls aimed to gather quick, broad-based feedback on specific aspects of Nollywood from a larger population. A respondent pool of 262 individuals constitutes a statistically significant basis for inferential analysis, offering a reliable representation of public opinion and reinforcing confidence in the validity of the findings.

Participant Privacy: This project is committed to respecting participants' privacy. Personal data regarding experience, culture, and ethnicity is used only in a generic form. Interview participants voluntarily waived their anonymity by signing the participant's information-consent form (See Figure 19).

2.6 Conclusion

Chapter Two systematically outlined this study's research methodology, focusing on Nollywood's role in preserving Nigerian heritage through storytelling. Adopting a qualitative paradigm, mainly through interviews, facilitated a deep and thorough exploration of Nollywood's narratives. This methodological rigour not only underscores Nollywood's contributions to cultural heritage and societal values but also ensures strict adherence to ethical standards, data security protocols, and participant demographics, thereby upholding the integrity of the research.

Beyond qualitative methods, the study employed a holistic methodology, integrating quantitative techniques such as polls and structured questionnaires. These methods complemented the qualitative findings by providing measurable insights into audience perceptions and stakeholder opinions. The triangulation of qualitative depth with quantitative breadth enhances the validity and reliability of the research, enabling a nuanced analysis of Nollywood's cultural impact.

This methodological framework equips the study with the necessary tools to examine Nollywood's intersection with Nigerian heritage critically. Integrating qualitative and quantitative

approaches ensures a multidimensional understanding of the cultural, social, and economic dynamics shaping Nollywood's narratives and its role in heritage preservation. The findings derived from this robust methodological design will inform subsequent discussions, anchoring them in a robust analytical framework.

Chapter Three

3 Interpretation of Select Nollywood Films

3.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a comprehensive examination and critique of selected Nollywood films, highlighting the rich diversity of genres contributing to the interpretation of Nigerian and African heritage. The films analysed in this chapter were selected based on their artistic merit and reception among fans, ensuring a representative cross-section of Nollywood's impact. The selection is not strictly chronological, as some contemporary works began production as early as the 1990s. In contrast, others—particularly epic narratives—are set in ancient times but were produced more recently, between 1987 and 2024. Reviewing these films is essential for understanding the thesis, as it offers insight into how these works—deeply rooted in Nigerian and African cultural identities—play a significant role in shaping and reflecting those identities through storytelling, visual language, and audience reception (Adebayo, 2024, p. 34). The rationale for reviewing and analysing in that sequence is that presenting a review before and alongside analysis establishes a coherent structure, supporting reader comprehension by providing essential background, aligning foundational knowledge, and enabling a logical progression from contextual understanding to critical interpretation (Corrigan, 2015).

The analysis covers various categories, including true-life stories and adaptations, epic narratives, contemporary Nigerian cinema, and myths and legends. It also investigates the influence of tribal and elitist perspectives on scriptwriting within the Nigerian film industry, presenting a complex and multifaceted view of the cultural heritage these films represent. This exploration is supported by data gathered from questionnaires, which provide additional layers of

insight into audience perceptions and the cultural significance these films hold in the eyes of the viewers (Okoro, 2024, p. 22).

The selected films—*Things Fall Apart* (1987), *Take Me To Mama* (1992), *Basorun Gaa* (2004), *Iyore* (2015), *Queen Amina* (2021), *Living in Bondage* (1992), *Domitila* (1996), *Sango* (1997) *Oloture* (2020) *Anikulapo* (2022), *Seven Doors* (2020), *Lakatabu* (2024), *October 1* (2014), *Half a Yellow Sun* (2013), and *Isoken* (2017)—serve as samples of the attributes of Nollywood's defining works. These particular titles were chosen not only for their thematic and artistic significance but also for their critical acclaim, commercial success, and enduring popularity among Nigerian and international audiences.

For instance, *Living in Bondage* (1992), a film often considered a cornerstone of Nollywood, sold over 750,000 VHS copies by the mid-1990s (Adebayo, 2024, p. 34; Okoro, 2024, p. 22), inspiring its sequel *Living in Bondage: Breaking Free* (2019), which grossed over £68 million in Nigerian cinemas (Okoro, 2024, p. 25). Similarly, *Domitila* (1996), one of the highest-grossing home video releases of its time, achieved sales in the hundreds of thousands (Adeyemi, 2024, p. 44) and continues to resonate culturally, as evidenced by its 2023 sequel, a testament to the enduring cultural impact of these films.

October 1 (2014), directed by Kunle Afolayan, earned over £25 million during its initial theatrical run (Oluwaseun, 2024, p. 12), showcasing the growing appeal of Nollywood's high-quality productions. Meanwhile, released on Netflix, *Anikulapo* (2022) garnered millions of viewers globally within its first month (Chukwu, 2024, p. 30), highlighting Nigerian storytelling's international reach and relevance. These examples underscore Nollywood's enduring significance and dynamic evolution as a medium for interpreting Nigerian and African heritage through film.

The table below (See Figure 11) foregrounds key information about selected films, particularly for readers unfamiliar with Nollywood's industry structure and key players. Outlining genres, release years, directors, producers, and production companies provides essential context for the film review and analysis. This structured overview systematically examines Nollywood's thematic evolution, storytelling techniques, and cultural representation across different eras. It also highlights industry trends, the impact of global platforms like Netflix, and Nollywood's role in preserving and reinterpreting Nigerian heritage within an increasingly globalised landscape.

List of Films and Categorisation/Basic Details Table

Film Title	Categorisation/Genre	Year of Release	Director	Assistant Director	Producer(s)	Production Company/Distributor
Amina	Myth/Legend, Tragedy	2021	Izu Chukwu	N/A	Christian Ashaiku and Wil Johnson	Videosonic Studios, BlackScreen, and Netflix.
Aníkúlápó	Epic, Tragicomedy, Drama	2022	Kunle Afolayan	Isaac Usoro, Azeez Onagbola	Kunle Afolayan	KAP Productions, Netflix
Basorun Gaa	Epic, Tragedy	2004	Adebayo Faleti	N/A	Adebayo Faleti	Afan Productions
Domitila	Contemporary, Drama, Tragedy	1996	Zeb Ejiro	N/A	Zeb Ejiro, Peter Red Ejiro, Chris Amechi Okobah	Zikoko

Isoken	Contemporary, Romance, Drama, Comedy	2017	Jadesola Osiberu	N/A	Jadesola Osiers	Tribe 85 Productions, Silverbird Distributions (Nigeria), Evirit Film (United Kingdom)
Iyore	Epic, Tragedy, Drama	2015	Frank Rajah Arase	N/A	Kwame Boadu	Raj and Heroes Films
Lakatabu	Contemporary, Drama	2024	Odunlade Adekola	N/A	Odunlade Adekola,	Odunlade Adekola Films, FilmOne Studios, Prime Video
Living in Bondage	Contemporary, Drama, Thriller	1992	Chris Obi Rapu	N/A	Kenneth Nnebue	Play Entertainment Network
Oloture	Contemporary, Thriller, Drama	2020	Daniel Etim Effiong	Moses Inwang	Daniel Etim Effiong, Moses Inwang	EbonyLife Films, Netflix
Sango	Myth/Legend, Tragedy, Epic	1997	Obafemi Lasode	Magdalene Lasode	Obafemi Lasode	Afrika'n Vogue/Even-Ezra Studios

Seven Doors	Epic, tragedy	2020	Femi Adebayo	Tope Adebayo, Adebayo Tijani	Femi Adebayo	Euphoria360 Media, Netflix
Take Me To Maam a	Contemporary, Drama	2002	Saint Obi	NA	Saint Obi	Bonag Industries Nigeria
Things Fall Apart	Epic, Tragedy	1987	David Orere	N/A	Peter Igho and Adiela Onyedibia	Nigerian Television Authority (NTA).

Figure 11: Shows a List of Films and Categorisation/Basic Details (Author's work, 2024).

3.1.1 Review and Analysis of *Basorun Gaa* (2004)

Adebayo Faleti's *Basorun Gaa* (2004), with a running time of 145 minutes, skilfully resurrects the historical account of Gaa, a central political figure in the Old Oyo Empire during the reign of Alaafin Labisi in the 18th century,1750-1774 to be precise (Usman and Falola,2019). This film vividly portrays Gaa's dramatic rise and fall, breathing life into Yoruba cultural and spiritual beliefs. Through its narrative, *Basorun Gaa* provides a captivating insight into the complexities of power dynamics, morality, and justice that remain relevant in contemporary Nigerian society (Faleti, 2004).

Gaa, as the Basorun or Prime Minister, held unparalleled influence. He leveraged his position as the head of the Oyomesi—the kingmakers of the empire—to enthrone and dethrone kings. This unchecked authority created a volatile political environment, leading to a series of manipulations that defied the sacred hierarchical order of the Yoruba people. The film captures this intricate power dynamic, portraying Gaa as a political mastermind and a tragic figure undone by his hubris (Alabi, 2006, pp. 111–124).

Central to the Yoruba worldview is the sanctity of kingship, where the Alaafin is seen as divinely chosen and sacrosanct. Gaa's demand that even the Alaafin bow to him represented political insubordination and a profound spiritual transgression. This act of hubris, a violation of the divine hierarchy central to Yoruba society, where 'royalty must be respected, hierarchy reigns supreme, and the king is next to divinity' (Akande and Ogunbiyi, 2022, pp. 97–106), is a central theme in the film. His eventual downfall aligns with the Yoruba belief in poetic justice, affirming that power abused is power lost.

Faleti's adaptation of Gaa's life is a critical example of Nollywood's ability to translate historical narratives into compelling cinematic experiences. The film's dramatic arc, from Gaa's rise as a kingmaker to his eventual lynching by the people, reflects the broader cultural values of justice and respect for authority. The vivid storytelling, combined with nuanced performances, ensures that the moral lessons inherent in Gaa's story are neither didactic nor diluted but remain integral to the viewing experience (Ohwovoriole, 2018, pp. 126–139).

The thematic focus of *Basorun Gaa* (2004) is evident in its exploration of the balance between power and morality. The Oyomesi, as portrayed in the film, are constitutionally tasked with curbing the Alaafin's excesses, ensuring a delicate balance of power. Gaa's manipulation of

this system, however, transforms the checks and balances into a tool for personal aggrandisement. His tyranny underscores a recurring theme in Nigerian folklore: the inevitability of justice. As Nolly07 noted, *'Nollywood storytelling techniques are very effective; it makes other cultures want to learn about ours,'* highlighting how the film preserves Nigerian history and educates global audiences about its cultural intricacies.

A key strength of *Basorun Gaa* lies in its ability to intertwine historical accuracy with moral lessons. The film delves into the socio-political structures of the Old Oyo Empire, illustrating the roles and responsibilities of its key figures. Through this, viewers gain insight into traditional governance, where respect for authority is paramount, and any deviation, as seen in Gaa's case, invites dire consequences. His lynching at the film's climax is not merely a punishment but a symbolic restoration of order, affirming the cultural belief that no individual, regardless of status, is above divine justice (Àjàdí and Fáyemí, 2012, p.187).

From a technical perspective, *Basorun Gaa* exemplifies the strengths and challenges of Nollywood's historical adaptations. The film's meticulous attention to costuming and set design immerses viewers in the era it portrays. However, respondents like Nolly07 suggest that improvements in cinematography could further elevate such productions, ensuring they resonate with wider audiences. 'Looking for funding to produce good cinematography' remains a vital recommendation for Nollywood's continued growth and impact on the global stage.

Ultimately, *Basorun Gaa* (2004) is an excellent example of how Nollywood, through its historical adaptations, preserves and projects Nigeria's rich cultural legacy. The film portrays Gaa's rise and fall with fidelity to historical and cultural realities, emphasising the timeless values of justice, humility, and respect for hierarchy. By combining historical education with engaging

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storytelling, *Basorun Gaa* exemplifies Nollywood's significant role in preserving and projecting Nigeria's rich cultural legacy to local and international audiences (Chukwu, 2024, pp. 30–33). The lessons from Gaa's life—his unchecked ambition and eventual downfall—are as relevant today as in the 18th century. They offer viewers a poignant reminder of the consequences of tyranny and the enduring importance of moral responsibility in leadership.

3.1.2 Review and Analysis: *Things Fall Apart* (1987)

The 1987 Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) adaptation of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) (See Appendix A, Figure 20) is a defining moment in Nollywood's journey to narrate Nigerian heritage. Directed by David Orere and produced by Peter Igho and Adiela Onyedibia, this single-season television series brought Achebe's seminal novel to life, with a running time of approximately 50 minutes per episode (IMDb,2024). The adaptation features performances by iconic actors like Pete Edochie, Nkem Owoh, Sam Loco Efe, and Justus Esiri as a multi-dimensional exploration of the Igbo socio-cultural landscape and the impacts of colonial intrusion. The series' in-depth exploration of the impacts of colonial intrusion, from the disruption of traditional norms to the tragic collapse of traditional life, provides a profound understanding of the historical context.

The visual storytelling in *Things Fall Apart* reflects the limitations and ambitions of 1980s Nigerian television. While constrained by the technical capacities of the era, the production excels in capturing the visual essence of Igbo culture. Authentic costumes and traditional settings—carefully reconstructed village compounds, marketplaces, and ritual spaces—imbue the series with a strong sense of place. Okadigwe (2023, pp. 1–22) aptly credits the success of such epic productions to the richness of their costumes, asserting that these visual elements serve as 'cultural

anchors.' Indeed, the vibrant colours of the traditional attire and the meticulous recreation of ritual objects enhance the authenticity of the visual narrative. Lighting and camera work, while rudimentary, focus on the actors' performances and the community dynamics. The close-ups of Pete Edochie's Okonkwo often emphasise his stoic determination, anger, or vulnerability, visually translating his internal conflicts. The communal scenes, with wide-angle shots capturing entire village gatherings, underline the collective nature of Igbo society. This balance between individual focus and collective portrayal situates *Things Fall Apart* (1987) as a visual homage to pre-colonial Nigeria despite its technical limitations.

The adaptation retains Achebe's episodic structure, dividing the narrative into digestible parts that mirror the novel's three-part framework: the pre-colonial Igbo society, the arrival of missionaries, and the tragic collapse of traditional life. This segmented approach facilitates the television format and underscores the progression of cultural disintegration. The narrative begins with Okonkwo's rise, characterised by his adherence to traditional norms and rejection of his father's perceived weaknesses. As colonial forces encroach, the story shifts to the gradual erosion of Igbo customs, culminating in Okonkwo's tragic demise. The adaptation's narrative pacing is deliberate, allowing viewers to immerse themselves in the complexities of Igbo life. The series provides a textured portrayal of pre-colonial society by focusing on communal ceremonies, familial relationships, and governance structures. According to Nolly08, 'The quality of stories being churned out is quite top-notch and mind-blowing.' This statement, though reflective of contemporary Nollywood, echoes the strengths of this adaptation in showcasing culturally rich narratives with nuanced character arcs.

At its core, *Things Fall Apart* (1987) is an exploration of identity, resilience, and the devastating effects of colonialism. The series' portrayal of Okonkwo's struggle to preserve Igbo traditions is an allegory for Nigeria's broader cultural tensions. Okonkwo's hypermasculinity and resistance to change are juxtaposed with the adaptability of other characters, such as Obierika, highlighting the spectrum of responses to colonial domination. Thematically, the series delves into cultural systems' intricate and often paradoxical dynamics when confronted with external forces. Okonkwo's downfall, marked by his inability to reconcile tradition with change, mirrors the broader African experience during colonisation. Many African societies faced similar tensions between upholding traditions and adjusting to colonial rule. Kenya's Kikuyu people resisted British rule, exemplified by the Mau Mau uprising (Elkins, 2022), while Ghana's Ashanti Empire underwent structural reconfiguration under colonial governance (McCaskie, 1995). These cases illustrate the pervasive impact of external forces on cultural integrity across the African continent, presenting a rich and complex field for intellectual exploration.

Although rooted in Igbo culture, the belief in a sacred, ancestral order underscores a universal caution against disrupting established systems.

The series demonstrates a deliberate commitment to thematic and cultural authenticity. Rather than romanticising or vilifying Igbo culture, it presents it as a multifaceted system influenced by both internal tensions and external colonial pressures. This nuanced representation highlights the filmmakers' sensitivity to the complexities of pre-colonial and colonial encounters. Through its focus on detail—visible in the portrayal of rituals, attire, and communal life—the adaptation upholds Achebe's vision of reclaiming African narratives from colonial misrepresentation. Despite the technological limitations of 1980s Nigerian television, the

production succeeds in communicating a powerful sense of cultural pride and historical consciousness.

The content of *Things Fall Apart* (1987) offers a meticulous reflection of Igbo heritage. The depiction of rituals, such as the Week of Peace and the wrestling matches, emphasises the centrality of communal bonds and spiritual observances. The narrative also delves into gender dynamics, portraying the patriarchal structures that govern relationships and inheritance. However, these depictions are not without critique, as the series subtly questions the rigidity of these norms through characters like Nwoye, whose rejection of traditional masculinity signals an alternative path. As Nolly08 remarked, 'They [scriptwriters] should research adequately on the stories and heritage before writing because not having the right information could end up portraying Nigeria in a bad light.' This emphasis on research and accuracy is evident in the adaptation's treatment of Igbo cosmology, particularly its representation of the gods, ancestral veneration, and the chi (personal god) (Ude, 2024, p.229).

The 1987 adaptation of *Things Fall Apart* (1958) remains foundational in Nollywood's epic storytelling tradition. Through its visual authenticity, structured narrative, and thematic depth, the series captures the complexities of Nigerian heritage and the universal struggle between tradition and modernity. Its portrayal of Okonkwo's rise and fall offers timeless lessons on identity, resilience, and the cost of resistance.

As Nolly18 noted, 'Quality over quantity must be prioritised over quantity, creating a high-quality narrative over producing a large volume of films solely for commercial success.' This approach values the depth and impact of the story, ensuring each piece is thoughtfully crafted. By focusing on quality, creators can build a lasting connection with their audience, which is a principle

that underscores the enduring relevance of *Things Fall Apart* (1987). The 1987 *Things Fall Apart* adaptation operationalises decolonisation theory by actively resisting epistemic violence and reclaiming Igbo cultural narratives from colonial erasure. By re-centring Indigenous epistemologies, the series foregrounds pre-colonial social structures and ontological frameworks, positioning them as sites of cultural sovereignty (Okadigwe, 2023). This strategic intervention destabilises colonial historiographies, affirming the adaptation's role in decolonising African storytelling and safeguarding intangible heritage (Murray, 2023). Synthesising cultural fidelity with cinematic innovation, the adaptation exemplifies Nollywood's evolving role as both an archival repository and a counter-hegemonic force. Beyond honouring Achebe's literary opus, it perpetuates Nigerian epistemic legacies across generations.

3.1.3 Review and Analysis: *Iyore* (2015)

Frank Rajah Arase's *Iyore* (2015), a 140-minute cinematic milestone, exemplifies Nollywood's strategic engagement with cultural preservation and historiographical reclamation. Rather than merely depicting gender roles in traditional Nigerian society, the film critically interrogates the socio-political constructs that govern women's roles, mainly through the character of Amenze, a sacred virgin (Inyang, 2024, pp. 1–13). Amenze's internal struggle reflects broader ontological tensions between agency and societal imposition, positioning her narrative as an epistemic site that challenges monolithic representations of African gender dynamics (Olonade et al., 2021, pp. 1–6), in contrast to essentialist readings of patriarchy, which views gender roles and power dynamics as innate and biologically determined rather than socially constructed and variable across cultures and historical contexts(Crane,2010), *Iyore* foregrounds women's spiritual and sociopolitical centrality, underscoring the complexity of African gender relations highlighting their pivotal roles within African societies.

Amenze's role in *Iyore* (2015) exemplifies intersectionality, a framework advanced by Crenshaw (1989), by illustrating how gender, tradition, and agency intersect to shape lived experience. The film positions Amenze at the nexus of cultural continuity and individual autonomy, exposing the tensions between societal constraints and self-determination. This aligns with Crenshaw's (1991) assertion that overlapping identities produce distinct experiences of power and marginalisation. Amenze's trajectory underscores how tradition simultaneously empowers and restricts, reaffirming intersectionality's analytical utility in examining identity and structural inequities. The film's commitment to historical authenticity is a reliable intervention against superficial or Westernised portrayals of African heritage. By demonstrating how gender, spirituality, and cultural obligations intersect, the film exposes the structural mechanisms that empower and constrain women within African traditions. *Iyore* moves beyond narrative representation, engaging in cinematic historiography and reconstructing Indigenous epistemologies. As Nolly09 noted, the film's unwavering commitment to historical authenticity underscores the necessity of rigorous research in Nollywood's storytelling.

The film's meticulous attention to cultural detail reinforces its epistemological depth. Beyond serving as a visual repository of Benin's historical customs, *Iyore* (2015) enacts a form of cinematic ethnography that aligns with Chinweizu's (1978, pp. 2–9) argument that African cinema must function as an archival medium for indigenous knowledge transmission. Bradbury's (2018, pp. 1–35) account of the Benin kingdom resonates with the film's historical fidelity, particularly in its depiction of Benin's ceremonial rites and royal traditions. This immersion into cultural specificity does not merely reconstruct the past but revitalises it, positioning *Iyore* as a medium through which collective memory is enacted and reaffirmed (Umejesi,2015).

Narratively, *Iyore* (2015) employs African oral traditions as a structuring device, reinforcing the communal ethos of historical transmission. By intertwining reincarnation with broader spiritual themes, the film aligns with Nollywood's potential to function as an aesthetic and pedagogical platform. Nolly09 underscores the necessity for regional narratives, a perspective that *Iyore* embodies through its commitment to Edo cultural identity while engaging universal themes of destiny and cyclical temporality. This speaks to the broader decolonial imperative within African cinema, which seeks to reassert indigenous frameworks of knowledge and existence.

Visually, *Iyore* (2015) translates metaphysical concepts into cinematic language through its symbolic use of colour, mise-en-scène, and architectural fidelity. The depiction of reincarnation as a cyclical force governing human existence aligns with African cosmological perspectives, reinforcing the film's philosophical underpinnings. The camera's focus on Benin's cultural artefacts, costumes, and spatial aesthetics (See Figure 12) creates an audiovisual archive that bridges historical authenticity with artistic interpretation. Nolly19 critiques Nollywood's tendency to adopt Western narrative structures, arguing instead for a commitment to Indigenous storytelling forms, which are narrative structures and techniques rooted in African oral traditions and cultural practices. 'They (Nollywood directors) should be more innovative and truer to the culture whose story they tell. Enough of adapting Western ideas; adopting their style.'

Figure 12: Illustrates Nigeria's tangible cultural heritage through a vibrant depiction of Benin costumes from *Iyore* (2015) (Rajah, 2015).

Thematically, *Iyore* (2015) meditates on the dialectic between tradition and individual agency, interrogating the tensions between cultural rigidity and spiritual evolution. Its linguistic fidelity, particularly its use of Edo, reinforces its commitment to cultural preservation, a central concern in African cinema's decolonial discourse (Gbadegesin and Osaghale, 2014, pp. 1–18). Nolly19 highlights the increasing demand for biographical and historically grounded narratives. This observation aligns with *Iyore's* exploration of reincarnation as a narrative mechanism and a powerful metaphor for cultural resurgence, inspiring a sense of cultural renewal.

In the final analysis, *Iyore* (2015) exemplifies Nollywood's capacity to synthesise cultural authenticity with cinematic innovation, reinforcing the industry's potential to function as an artistic and historiographical medium. Its engagement with gender, spirituality, and historical reconstruction positions it within the broader trajectory of Nigerian heritage cinema. As Nolly19 (2024) asserts, *Iyore* belongs to a canon of contemporary Nollywood films—such as *A Tribe Called Judah* (2023) and *A Breath of Life* (2023)—that signal the industry's growing intellectual and aesthetic ambition. *Iyore* (2015) reconstructs the past and interrogates its ongoing resonance by weaving intricate thematic concerns with rigorous historical detail. In doing so, the film plays a vital role in sustaining Africa's cultural discourse across temporal and ideological boundaries, fostering a sense of connection and continuity (Harrow, 2023).

3.1.4 Review and Analysis: *Amina* (2021)

Izu Ojukwu's *Amina* (2021), set in the historic northern Nigerian city of Zazzau (now Zaria) with a runtime of 120 minutes, is a landmark Nollywood production that reclaims African epistemological frameworks, which, as postulated by Sefa (2010) emphasise interconnectedness, communal knowledge, and lived experiences. They challenge Western dominance, focusing on decolonial thought and indigenous ways of knowing. Knowledge is holistic, communal, and deeply tied to cultural practices and traditions. Hence, the choice of Zazzau as the setting is significant as it was the seat of power for Queen Amina, and the film's portrayal of this city and its cultural practices adds depth and authenticity to the narrative. Chronicling the reign of Queen Amina from 1576 to 1610, the film reconstructs her legacy as a warrior queen whose strategic acumen and political authority challenge dominant historical narratives. This portrayal aligns with Sophie Oluwole's philosophical advocacy for recognising African systems of knowledge, oral traditions, and indigenous languages as integral to historical and cultural identity. The film's thematic

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concerns echo Marcus Garvey's assertion that 'A people without the knowledge of their history, origin, and culture is like a tree without roots' (Garvey, 1923, p. 68), positioning *Amina* (2021) as an act of cultural reclamation that resists Westernised distortions while reaffirming Nigeria's rich heritage (Oluwole, 1997, pp. 95–121).

African historical narratives have long been overshadowed by colonial epistemologies, a suppression that Oluwole critiques in her argument: 'For Africans to gain philosophical independence, they must restore confidence in their traditional modes of thought' (Oluwole, 1997, pp. 20–29). *Amina* (2021) challenges this marginalisation by meticulously reconstructing Zazzau's political structures, linguistic heritage, and cultural practices with a steadfast commitment to historical accuracy. This commitment directly engages concerns raised by Nolly10, who critiques Nollywood's occasional tendency to foreground external cultural influences over Indigenous narratives. By presenting Queen Amina through an Afrocentric lens, Ojukwu's work reinforces Oluwole's argument that African philosophical traditions, such as communalism and oral storytelling, must be foregrounded on their terms rather than filtered through Western paradigms.

By placing a formidable female leader at the centre of its historical retelling, *Amina* (2021) disrupts Eurocentric historiographies that diminish the contributions of African women. Oluwole (2017, pp. 20–29) argues that colonial ideologies systematically erased the prominence of female rulers in African history, a distortion the film actively rectifies. Queen Amina is not merely depicted as a figure of resistance but as a leader whose governance, military prowess, and intellectual acumen challenge gendered assumptions about power and historical agency, inspiring a sense of empowerment. Her portrayal underscores the necessity of gender-conscious

historiography in African cinema, reinforcing a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of leadership in pre-colonial African societies.

The film's visual and narrative techniques further strengthen its historiographical engagement. The intricate costume design, architectural reconstructions, and battlefield sequences transform the cinematic space into an immersive historical archive. Okadigwe (2023, pp. 1–22) describes such elements as 'cultural anchors,' reinforcing how Nollywood productions can serve as aesthetic and intellectual artefacts. The cinematography and lighting choices emphasise the grandeur of Amina's rule while visually encoding the challenges she faced, ensuring that the film's historical re-imagination remains grounded in spectacle and substance. Oluwole (1997, pp. 23–42) highlights the importance of oral traditions in African epistemology, asserting that they provide 'the philosophical essence of the community's collective wisdom.' The film mirrors this by structuring its narrative along traditional African storytelling lines, privileging a linear progression that reflects the logic of oral historiography over the fragmented, non-linear structures often favoured in Western storytelling conventions.

Beyond its historical significance, *Amina* (2021) reflects Nollywood's growing global visibility. In portraying Queen Amina with depth and nuance, the film advances Nigerian cultural narratives while demonstrating their broader relevance. This approach aligns with Hountondji's (2009, pp. 1–19) argument that African intellectual and cultural traditions must be positioned within global discourses rather than relegated to regional specificity. *Amina* (2021) affirms Nollywood's capacity to produce culturally specific and globally resonant cinema by centring an African historical figure in a universally compelling narrative.

The film's thematic concerns extend beyond gender politics and historical revisionism to engage with more significant cultural continuity and resilience questions. Amina's journey is not solely a tale of individual ambition but an allegory for resisting cultural erasure in the face of external forces. This aligns with Oluwole's assertion that African societies must actively reclaim their intellectual traditions to challenge colonial legacies. As Nolly10 aptly notes, 'Be intentional and detailed. Do not downplay quality delivery,' reinforcing Nollywood's need to engage with historical subjects with depth, precision, and cultural responsibility. *Amina* (2021) stands as a powerful testament to the resilience of African cultures in the face of colonial legacies (Hoppers,2002), inspiring a sense of empowerment and cultural pride by challenging these legacies head-on.

Viewed through Oluwole's philosophical lens, which emphasises the place of African orature in its trajectory and evolution, *Amina* (2021) emerges as a profound assertion of African intellectual independence. Notably, the film rejects Western historiographical frameworks, demonstrating its commitment to gender inclusivity and emphasis on Indigenous epistemology, and positioning it as a vital contribution to Nollywood's cultural discourse. While critiques of Nollywood's inconsistent engagement with Nigerian heritage are valid, *Amina* (2021) exemplifies the industry's potential to function as both a historical archive and an intellectual force. By prioritising historical authenticity and theoretical depth, the film reaffirms Nollywood's role in shaping contemporary African identity and affirms Oluwole's vision of cultural sovereignty in a globalised world.

3.1.5 Review and Analysis of *Aníkúlápó* (2022)

Unveiling Yoruba cosmology through cinematic artistry, Kunle Afolayan's *Aníkúlápó* (2022), a title that translates to 'The One Who Carries Death ', stands as a pivotal contribution to Nollywood**.** It intertwines cultural authenticity with philosophical depth, interrogating Yoruba cosmology and ethical dilemmas (Kanu, 2013, pp. 533-555). Through a meticulously structured narrative and evocative visual language, the film examines the moral complexities of life, death, and resurrection, offering an immersive portrayal of precolonial Yoruba existence (Ezeupe, 2024).

Moral retribution and the Yoruba worldview underpin the film's engagement with Yoruba metaphysics, particularly the concept of *Akúdaaya* (transmigrated souls). Abayomi (2022) notes that this notion aligns with the broader Yoruba belief in reincarnation, encompassing variations such as ancestral rebirth and 'born to die' phenomena. This ontological premise forms the foundation of Saro's trajectory as he contends with the consequences of his supernatural ability to resurrect the dead. The Akálà bird, a significant symbol in Yoruba cosmology, as a metaphysical agent, endows Saro with power, transforming him into a liminal figure caught between personal ambition and the weight of existential accountability.

Ganiyu (2024) explicates that the film encapsulates the Yoruba worldview, in which life and death are fluid constructs interwoven within a cosmic schema that demands equilibrium. Resurrection, within this paradigm, does not signify triumph but rather an ontological rupture, inciting profound consequences. Nolly23 observes, 'The film *Aníkúlápó* situates its characters within the intricate matrix of Yoruba cosmology, compelling viewers to confront the spiritual and ethical ramifications of resurrection.' This disruption manifests in Saro's entanglement with Arolake, a relationship emblematic of desire and transgression. Their narrative arc is an allegory

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for the destabilising effects of hubris, reinforcing Yoruba's ethical thought. As Nolly23 further asserts, 'Afolayan employs their relationship as a conduit to explore the reverberations of moral transgressions, deeply embedded in Yoruba ethics.'

Afolayan's meticulous visual aesthetic fortifies the film's philosophical inquiry, offering a sensory immersion into precolonial Yoruba civilisation. The authentic representation of attire, architecture, and ceremonial practices fosters historical verisimilitude. The Akálà bird, deific representations (Ganiyu, 2024), and reincarnation rites elevate the film beyond conventional storytelling, transforming it into a culturally resonant experience. Nolly23 asserts that *Aníkúlápó* (2022) is 'a sensory tapestry, interweaving visual splendour with cultural epistemologies, bridging the realms of art and anthropology.' The interplay between landscape, costume, and mise-en-scène evokes a reality in which materiality and metaphysics are inextricably linked (Ojo, 2024).

The film employs semiotic depth, with symbolic motifs as conduits for its metaphysical discourse. The Akálà bird signifies destiny and retribution, reinforcing the interdependence of corporeal and spiritual realities (Ganiyu, 2024). Bestowing Saro with the ability to manipulate life and death, the film interrogates notions of moral responsibility within Yoruba cosmology. As Nolly23 elaborates, 'Through its semiotic richness, the film transcends visual storytelling, offering an epistemic engagement deeply rooted in Yoruba ontological traditions.'

The performances of Kunle Remi as Saro and Bimbo Ademoye as Arolake serve as emotive anchors, accentuating the film's thematic gravitas. Remi encapsulates Saro's oscillation between ambition and existential burden, while Ademoye's portrayal of Arolake embodies love, betrayal, and resilience. Their interactions encapsulate Yoruba cosmological ethics, wherein individual agency reverberates within spiritual and societal networks (Ojo, 2024). As Nolly23 notes,

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'These performances are imbued with emotional and ethical complexity, elevating the film beyond mere entertainment towards an interrogation of human fallibility and spiritual reckoning.'

In a Nollywood landscape often defined by commercial formulae, *Aníkúlápó* (2022) emerges as an intellectually rigorous text that foregrounds African philosophical discourse such as Afrocentric communalism, where the wellbeing of the group takes precedence over individualism, as it interrogates Afrocentric communalism (Eboh,2004) through Saro's misuse of resurrective powers, destabilising community harmony. This reflects Yoruba cosmology's moral reciprocity, where actions ripple across spiritual and societal realms. By critiquing individualism through collective disruption, the film aligns with Okigbo and Nnodim's (2024) exploration of *Ubuntu*'s ethos: 'I am because we are'.

Ganiyu (2024) posits that the film subverts industry conventions by prioritising cultural epistemology over melodrama, engaging audiences in a dialectic of indigenous metaphysics. Its 144-minute runtime, augmented by a six-part series that further interrogates its philosophical dimensions, each part delving into a specific aspect of the film's philosophical discourse, exemplifies Afolayan's commitment to expanding African cinematic frontiers (Ezepue, 2024). As Nolly23 articulates, 'This film reconfigures Nollywood's narrative potential, synthesising Indigenous philosophy with global cinematic methodologies to produce a work of transcultural resonance.'

Aníkúlápó (2022) operates as both a philosophical meditation and a cultural artefact, embedding Yoruba cosmology within a narrative framework that is intellectually and aesthetically profound. Through its interrogation of existence, fate, and retribution, the film positions itself as a seminal work in Nollywood, advancing the discourse on African cinema's potential for philosophical and cultural introspection.

3.1.6 Review and Analysis: *Sango: The Legendary African King* **(1997)**

Femi Lasode's *Sango (1997)* is a 160-minute seminal Nollywood production that intricately weaves mythology and history to explore the multifaceted legacy of Sango, a revered Yoruba ruler deified as the god of thunder and lightning. With Wale Adebayo in the titular role, the film delves into ambition, justice, moral conflict, and human frailty themes. Rooted in Yoruba cosmology and oral traditions (Falola, 2022, p.21), *Sango* presents a culturally resonant narrative that simultaneously engages modern audiences. The portrayal of Sango encapsulates his historical prowess as a formidable military strategist and administrative innovator who significantly strengthened the Oyo Empire (Adeyeri, 2019). However, his mythological representation also serves as a cautionary tale of hubris and excess, reflecting the complex duality of his character as both a revered leader and a tragic figure (Badru S.A. et al., 2024).

Wole Soyinka (1990) notably compares Sango to Zeus, underscoring their shared association with thunder and their embodiment of supreme authority. This analogy underscores the universal archetype of the powerful yet fallible ruler. Within Yoruba cosmology, Sango's control over thunderstones and his volatile temperament epitomises the dual nature of creative and destructive power (Adeoye, 2023, pp. 45–58). This duality is central to Lasode's cinematic interpretation, which constructs Sango as a tragic hero whose relentless ambition isolates him and precipitates his downfall. The film's exploration of his character nuances the Yoruba understanding of leadership, highlighting the interplay between strength and moral responsibility.

Employing an Afrocentric theoretical framework, *Sango* (1997) prioritises Indigenous African perspectives, rejecting westernised cinematic conventions in favour of a culturally authentic representation (Osei-Tutu, 2023). As articulated by Okafor (1996, p.44), Afrocentrism seeks to centre African historical and philosophical paradigms, positioning Sango as an emblem

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of African resilience and identity. The film's linguistic authenticity, use of traditional Yoruba costumes, and meticulous portrayal of cultural practices reinforce Lasode's commitment to historical and cultural accuracy. As Nolly14 observes, 'Looking at Nigerian films, *Sango* is one of the movies that shows us how Nollywood can remind us of our roots. It is not just entertainment but an education in who we are as Africans.'

The film's linear narrative structure mirrors the oral tradition through which Sango's legacy has been preserved, ensuring accessibility to a broad audience. Tracing his ascension as Alaafin of Oyo, his military conquests, and his eventual deification, the storyline reinforces the moral lessons embedded in his mythos. Nolly15 emphasises this, stating, 'Nollywood should keep telling stories like this—stories that have meaning and depth, not just quick entertainment.' Visually, *Sango* (1997) immerses viewers in the grandeur of the Oyo Empire (Ade-Ali, et al., 2024). The film's meticulous attention to traditional Yoruba aesthetics, from the intricate beadwork and textiles to the symbolic artefacts, enhances the film's historical credibility. Complemented by evocative soundscapes featuring Yoruba drums and chants, the film functions as a 'visual archive' of Yoruba heritage (Abodunrin and Akinola, 2019, pp. 87–100).

Thematically, *Sango* (1997) interrogates the moral dilemmas of leadership, ambition, and divine order. Sango's downfall aligns with Yoruba's philosophical teachings on balance and humility. Adeoye (2023, pp. 45–58) contextualises his tragic fate within the Yoruba worldview, where unchecked power inevitably leads to ruin. This thematic exploration aligns with Afrocentric perspectives that emphasise African leadership traditions' moral and spiritual dimensions (Okafor, 1996, p.12). Despite its narrative strengths, *Sango* (1997) highlights a broader gap in Nollywood's engagement with Indigenous mythologies. Nolly14 critiques the industry's preoccupation with contemporary themes, asserting, 'Nollywood sometimes forgets the depth of our stories. We have

gods, heroes, and legends—why aren't they on screen more often?' This observation underscores Nollywood's potential to expand its mythological repertoire.

Adebayo's portrayal of Sango is a defining strength of the film (See Figure 13), capturing the ruler's charisma, ferocity, and vulnerability. His interactions with subordinates and family members humanise the legendary figure, offering a nuanced portrayal rarely seen in Nollywood's often formulaic characterisations. This contrasts with the criticisms of 'predictable endings' and 'unreal storylines' frequently levelled at Nollywood films by respondents like Nolly15. As Idakwo and Akpovye (2024, p. 177) contend, *Sango* demonstrates that culturally rooted narratives can be engaging and intellectually rich, challenging Nollywood to elevate its storytelling approach. Idakwo and Akpovye (2024, p. 177) contend, *Sango* demonstrates that culturally rooted narratives can be engaging and intellectually rich, challenging Nollywood to elevate its storytelling approach.

Figure 13: Shows a scene from Wale Adebayo's portrayal of the fiery Sango in the film (Lasode, 1997).

Furthermore, Sango's deification is significant within an Afrocentric theoretical context, reinforcing Yoruba cosmology's fluid boundary between humanity and divinity. The film's depiction of his transition from mortal to deity reflects the Yoruba belief in the interconnectedness of the physical and spiritual realms. This thematic element aligns with Paschal-Mbakwe and Okoronkwo's (2024, pp. 120–136) assertion that African myths embody universal truths capable of enriching global cinematic discourse.

In sum, *Sango: The Legendary African King* (1997) stands as a landmark in Nollywood's mythological storytelling, preserving Yoruba heritage while engaging with universal themes of leadership, morality, and ambition. Its cultural authenticity, narrative depth, and visual splendour

distinguish it within Nollywood's filmic landscape. However, as critics such as Nolly14 and Nolly15 suggest, the industry still has significant room to further explore its rich mythological traditions. Films like *Sango* (1997) underscore Nollywood's potential to function as both a cultural repository and a global ambassador for African heritage, affirming the ongoing relevance of mythological narratives in contemporary cinema.

3.1.7 Review and Analysis of *Seven Doors* (2020)

Seven Doors (2020), directed by Femi Adebayo, is a visually compelling and thematically rich exploration of cultural unity and division in 18th-century Yorubaland (Onuegbu, 2023). The film's approximately 120-minute runtime weaves a complex narrative around the marriage of a Yoruba king to an Igbo queen—a symbolic reconciliation between two distinct cultures. However, this fragile union is tested by external forces, such as economic ambitions and spiritual influences, that challenge traditional values. Through a carefully constructed interplay of love, betrayal, and political intrigue, the film interrogates the intricate relationship between culture, identity, and modernisation. This sort of interrogation, as explored in Sokk (2024), reveals the sensitivity of such a relationship where modernity can lead to an erosion of indigenous culture.

From a thematic perspective, *Seven Doors* (2020) further examines the tension between tradition and modernity. Nolly24 asserts, 'Adebayo's directorial approach exemplifies the calibre of storytelling that Nollywood directors should aspire to, underscoring the need for technical expertise in translating cultural stories to the screen.' This statement highlights the film's dual role as an entertaining cinematic work and an educational tool for preserving cultural heritage. By integrating indigenous dialects, traditional attire, music, and artistic expressions, *Seven Doors* (2020) reinforces its cultural authenticity. This aligns with Nolly24's observation that

'Nollywood's strength in projecting cultural identity globally via platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime ensures that these narratives remain relevant.'

Seven Doors (2020) employs a unique narrative structure that revolves around dichotomies such as unity versus division, tradition versus innovation, and personal desires versus communal responsibilities. This distinctive approach, as revealed through visual and thematic analysis, captivates the audience with Femi Adebayo's deliberate contrast between the opulence of Yoruba royalty and the stark pragmatism introduced by external economic influences. The juxtaposition effectively encapsulates the broader conflict between cultural preservation and adaptation, creating a dynamic storytelling experience that mirrors Nigeria's historical and contemporary cultural crossroads (Okure, 2024).

A content analysis of the characters in *Seven Doors* (2020) reveals an intricate approach to cultural representation and conflict resolution. The Yoruba king and Igbo queen symbolise interethnic unity, while external disruptions challenge this fragile balance. While Nolly24 critiques some Nollywood screenwriters for 'occasionally falling short in creating multidimensional characters,' *Seven Doors* (2020) successfully avoids this pitfall. The queen's journey from outsider to an integral part of the Yoruba court mirrors the broader cultural assimilation and resistance process, providing the film with an emotionally compelling narrative core that keeps the audience engaged and invested in the characters' journeys.

Seven Doors (2020) also offers a nuanced portrayal of Hausa's influences in shaping the economic dimension of precolonial Nigerian society. The arrival of a Hausa trader introduces an economic dynamic that disrupts existing cultural norms, reflecting the historical realities of interregional trade. In 18th-century West Africa, Hausa traders played a crucial role in commerce,

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establishing trade routes that facilitated the movement of goods, ideas, and economic structures across ethnic boundaries (Olaniyi, 2007). This trade brought prosperity but also introduced tensions between economic progress and indigenous authority. The film mirrors these historical dynamics by depicting how economic ambitions challenge traditional values, adding complexity to the interplay of politics, commerce, and identity. This economic layer further enriches *Seven Doors* (2020), making it a multidimensional examination of societal transformation.

In comparison to other Nollywood films, *Seven Doors* (2020) stands out for its engagement with interethnic relations in a nation of diverse cultures. While many Nollywood productions focus on single ethnic groups, *Seven Doors* (2020) broadens this scope by weaving together Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa perspectives. This interwoven approach enriches the cultural discourse in Nigerian cinema and enlightens the audience about the complexities of interethnic relations. Nolly25 (2024) remarks, 'This film is unique because it teaches about different cultures and reflects societal issues like politics, using native dialects and a diverse storyline.'

The film's visual symbolism is profoundly impactful. The titular seven doors metaphorically signify cultural thresholds and represent its central themes of reconciliation and unity. Each door traversed symbolises a progressive, albeit arduous, journey toward understanding. This visual symbolism, in line with Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, adds layers of meaning to the narrative, making the audience appreciate the film's artistry and engagement with Nigerian cultural history and the broader philosophical concept of identity.

Nolly24's call for 'more suspenseful and unpredictable storytelling in Nollywood stories' is partially addressed in *Seven Doors* (2020). While the overarching narrative—a union threatened by external and spiritual forces—follows a somewhat predictable trajectory, the film's political

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intrigue and personal betrayal subplots add depth to the central conflict. The introduction of economic tensions echoes historical shifts in 18th-century West Africa. This narrative complexity reaffirms Nollywood's evolving approach to storytelling, as noted by Nolly24.

The casting and production choices in *Seven Doors* (2020) also merit discussion. The film's ensemble cast delivers performances that lend authenticity to the characters. However, as Nolly24 (2024) critiques, 'Nollywood must prioritise story and character uniqueness over repetitive casting.' *Seven Doors* (2020) successfully avoids the formulaic portrayals that sometimes weaken Nollywood's character-driven narratives. Instead, it selects actors who embody their roles with depth and nuance, making the characters feel authentic and unique to the audience.

The film's interplay between Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa influences highlights the dynamic nature of cultural identity. This blending of traditions and perspectives reflects the contested yet fertile space where cultures negotiate meaning and authority. As Nolly24 critiques, 'lazy writing and underdeveloped characters serve as a reminder of areas for growth.' While *Seven Doors* (2020) is not entirely free of these challenges, it successfully constructs a compelling and thought-provoking narrative.

Seven Doors (2020) exemplifies Nollywood's potential to create culturally significant and narratively complex films. By engaging with interethnic relations, historical themes, and visual symbolism, the film situates itself within broader disciplines, including Nollywood's real identity and national unity. Its ability to present Nigerian heritage globally while addressing universal themes of division and reconciliation underscores its cinematic significance. As Nollywood continues to evolve, films like *Seven Doors* (2020) demonstrate the industry's capacity to function as both a cultural archive and a medium for contemporary storytelling. The film's reception and

impact on the Nollywood industry further solidify its cultural significance, as it has sparked discussions about the representation of interethnic relations and the preservation of cultural heritage in Nigerian cinema.

3.1.8 Review and Analysis of *Living in Bondage* (1992)

The release of Chris Obi Rapu's *Living in Bondage* (1992), a 163-minute film, marked a watershed moment in Nollywood's evolution, signifying the emergence of an Indigenous cinematic voice. At its core, the film traces the moral descent of Andy Okeke, whose pursuit of affluence propels him into the clutches of an occult society. His metamorphosis from a diligent, ambitious man to a spiritually enslaved individual critically reflects Nigerians' socio-cultural dilemmas in the early 1990s. By intricately weaving themes of greed, ethical degeneration, and redemption with traditional African spiritual beliefs, *Living in Bondage* (1992) presents a compelling study of human frailty and cultural resilience (Endong,2024).

The film's linear narrative structure effectively reinforces its didactic essence, drawing viewers into Andy's inexorable decline. This storytelling approach aligns with African oral traditions, where moral lessons unfold through chronological progression. As Nolly11 asserts, '*Living in Bondage*, being my favourite Nigerian film of all time, does not just tell a story; it immerses you in a moral dilemma that resonates with Nigerian realities.' This immersive quality is pivotal in sustaining the film's relevance, as it not only compels audiences to engage with the ethical ramifications of unchecked ambition but also entertains and intellectually stimulates them.

Living in Bondage (1992) offers a socio-economic critique of the rising materialism in Nigerian society in the early 1990s. The film exposes the extent to which individuals are willing to compromise their morals for wealth and status, while also affirming traditional African values—particularly the belief in spiritual justice. The use of the Igbo language, complemented by English

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subtitles, enhances the film's cultural authenticity and accessibility to a broader audience. Euphemia, Ben and Unekwu (2015) argue that such linguistic strategies are fundamental to Nollywood's role in preserving Nigerian heritage within an increasingly globalised cinematic landscape.

Visually, the film's austere production aesthetic reflects the financial constraints that characterised early Nollywood. However, this modest visual presentation does not diminish its narrative potency. By juxtaposing Andy's humble beginnings with his subsequent material excess, the film constructs a striking contrast that accentuates the ethical cost of his choices. Scenes depicting ritualistic ceremonies and rural settings are rendered with cultural specificity, anchoring the narrative within a recognisably Nigerian milieu. Abodunrin and Akinola (2019) argue that, despite its lack of advanced visual effects, Nollywood thrives on its ability to evoke cultural authenticity—an attribute *Living in Bondage* (1992) epitomises.

Living in Bondage (1992) delves into the dialectics of tradition versus modernity and morality versus materialism. Andy's moral decline, driven by his insatiable desire for wealth, culminates in a spiritual crisis, echoing African cosmological beliefs about the inescapable consequences of hubris. This aligns with Abimbola's (1976) assertion that storytelling serves as a vessel for cultural and ethical instruction. In this context, the film assumes the role of a modern griot—a narrative custodian who imparts ethical wisdom to the audience, connecting them to their cultural heritage. As Mbaku (2007) posits, such storytelling traditions serve as a mechanism for societal self-examination, cautioning against the perils of unbridled ambition.

Furthermore, the film's Afrocentric orientation is integral to its thematic depth. It foregrounds spiritual justice and the inevitability of divine retribution, reinforcing its grounding in

African cosmology. As Lateef et al. (2024) observe, Afrocentrism prioritises African philosophical and cultural frameworks, ensuring they remain untainted by external distortions. *Living in Bondage* (1992) embodies this ethos by embedding traditional beliefs within its narrative fabric, offering a culturally specific and universally resonant storyline.

The film's emphasis on spirituality is particularly salient, as it illustrates the interconnectedness of the material and supernatural realms. Andy's eventual redemption is not merely a personal catharsis but a reaffirmation of the spiritual laws that govern human existence. As Nolly11 remarks, 'The strength of narrative, especially *Living in Bondage* (1992), lies in its ability to show that no matter how far one strays, cultural and spiritual laws cannot be escaped. It is a universal truth told through a Nigerian perspective.' This underscores the film's dual function as a cultural artefact and a moral compass, enriching viewers with its profound philosophical underpinnings and instilling a sense of cultural pride, while also guiding them through life's moral complexities.

Despite its rudimentary production, *Living in Bondage* (1992) remains a seminal work in Nollywood, laying the foundation for subsequent filmmakers striving to harmonise cultural authenticity with contemporary storytelling. Its exploration of ethical dilemmas, spiritual justice, and societal values continues to resonate, ensuring its enduring significance. *Living in Bondage* (1992) established Nollywood as a formidable artistic and cultural movement by embracing its indigenous roots and engaging audiences through compelling narratives.

In its fusion of narrative profundity, cultural integrity, and moral inquiry, *Living in Bondage* (1992) stands as a cornerstone of Nigerian cinema. Its legacy is not merely its ability to captivate but also its capacity to educate, reminding audiences of the timeless relevance of ethical integrity

in an ever-changing world. As Nollywood advances, the lessons embedded within *Living in Bondage* (1992) remain a guiding force, ensuring that Nigerian cinema retains its distinct voice while addressing universal moral imperatives.

3.1.9 Review and Analysis: *Domitilla* (1996)

Domitilla (1996), directed by Zeb Ejiro, is a seminal work in Nollywood, offering a compelling exploration of gender, survival, and moral complexity within a patriarchal society. With a runtime of 106 minutes, the film stars Anne Njemanze as the titular character, alongside Sandra Achums, Ada Ameh, and Kate Henshaw. It delves into the lives of four women navigating the precarious and often dehumanising world of prostitution in Lagos. The film's title is symbolic, signifying the protagonist's adoption of a new identity for survival, a theme that resonates deeply within feminist and gender discourse (Okiriguo, 2016).

Thematically, *Domitilla* interrogates the socio-economic structures that shape women's experiences, foregrounding survival as a central narrative motif. The protagonist, Ngozi, assumes the alias Domitilla to provide for her ailing father, a choice with ethical dilemmas. The film's incisive critique of the systemic failures that force women into morally ambiguous roles is particularly enlightening. Nolly22 remarks, 'I recommend *Domitilla* as my favourite Nollywood movie as a woman because it exposes the systemic failures that reduce women to mere survivors in a society that often denies them agency or opportunity.' This aligns with bell hooks' (1984) intersectional feminist critique, which emphasises how overlapping systems of oppression—such as gender, class, and systemic inequality—shape women's lived experiences, as seen in *Domitilla* (1996). It also resonates with Salami's (2020) call for a Black feminist approach that centres African women's lived realities within cultural and artistic representation. This perspective

underscores the necessity of an intersectional framework to address and dismantle systemic injustices. It advocates for a nuanced understanding that moves beyond one-dimensional perspectives on inequality. *Domitilla* transcends representation by engaging with these dynamics as a socio-political commentary on gendered inequality in Nigeria.

From a narrative standpoint, *Domitilla* (1996) adopts a character-driven approach, using the intersecting lives of Ngozi, Judith, Anita, and Jenny to illustrate diverse yet interconnected experiences of marginalisation. The film subverts conventional portrayals of prostitution by humanising its characters rather than reducing them to moral archetypes. As Nolly22 observes, 'Characters in Nollywood films are not mere victims; they are complex individuals negotiating survival in a world that offers them few alternatives. This portrayal challenges audiences to reconsider their biases.' However, some scholars, such as Okome (2007), argue that the film sometimes oversimplifies traditional values, framing them as obstacles rather than nuanced cultural constructs. This tension between modern feminist discourse and indigenous Nigerian traditions underscores the complexities of gender representation in Nollywood.

Visually, the film employs a raw, almost documentary-like aesthetic, using dim lighting and handheld camerawork to accentuate the precariousness of the women's existence. The urban landscape of Lagos is not merely a backdrop but an active participant in the story, reflecting the structural inequalities at play. Symbolism is evident throughout, particularly in the recurring image of cracked mirrors, which signify fractured identities and societal expectations. While this gritty realism enhances the film's thematic impact, it also diverges from the vibrant aesthetic of Nigerian cinematic heritage (Edeki and Emeni, 2019), raising questions about Nollywood's engagement with visual storytelling traditions.

The film's engagement with feminist film theory is particularly noteworthy. It foregrounds the commodification of women's bodies, aligning with Aromona's (2016) critique of patriarchal media representation. *Domitilla* (1996) challenges the male gaze by presenting its female protagonists as autonomous individuals rather than passive objects. As Nolly22 asserts, '*Domitilla* dismantles stereotypes, showcasing the resilience and dignity of women forced into morally complex situations.' However, Wole Soyinka (1990) critiques the tendency of feminist narratives to overemphasise individual struggles at the expense of communal values, an observation that applies to *Domitilla* (1996). While the film offers a powerful account of women's resilience, its focus on individual agency sometimes marginalises the collective approach at the heart of Nigerian cultural identity.

Despite its feminist undertones, *Domitilla's* narrative diverges from traditional Nigerian storytelling, which often celebrates communal triumphs over individual battles. As Nolly22 notes, 'The film's stark individualism, though powerful, risks marginalising the collective ethos central to Nigerian cultural identity.' While the film successfully critiques societal constraints on women, it does so through a framework that sometimes overlooks the role of communal solidarity in African societies.

Ultimately, *Domitilla* (1996) remains a landmark in Nollywood's exploration of gender and social inequality. Its impact extends beyond its era, shaping subsequent representations of women in Nigerian cinema. By addressing the moral dilemmas women face in patriarchal societies, the film advances critical discourse on feminism and gender representation in Nollywood (Ofori, 2024). Its thematic depth, narrative complexity, and visual authenticity continue to inspire debate, positioning *Domitilla* (1996) as a vital reference point in African feminist film studies. However,

its engagement with Nigerian heritage reveals both the potential and limitations of feminist storytelling within Nollywood. By juxtaposing the resilience of its characters with the broader societal structures constraining them, *Domitilla* (1996) challenges audiences to reconcile contemporary feminist perspectives with traditional African values.

3.1.10 Review and Analysis: *Take Me to Maama* (2002)

Take Me to Maama (2002), with a running time of 155 minutes, epitomises the intersection of tradition and modernity within contemporary Nollywood. The title, *Take Me to Maama*, serves as a cultural signifier, encapsulating the enduring significance of familial bonds and the matriarchal figure in Nigerian society. Directed by Saint Obi, this film intricately examines the dynamics of intergenerational conflict, familial obligations, and the broader societal negotiation between rapid modernisation and steadfast adherence to tradition. As Nollywood continues to evolve, the film aligns with the perspectives of Nolly12, who underscores the industry's trajectory towards globally resonant yet authentically Nigerian storytelling. The film's thematic exploration underscores its significance as a case study for understanding Nollywood's role in shaping and reflecting contemporary African realities.

At its core, *Take Me to Maama* (2002) interrogates the persistent tension between tradition and modernity—an enduring pattern within Nollywood narratives. The generational divide is a critical axis upon which the film's conflict is structured, with individual identity formation being heavily influenced by societal expectations (Cole, 2011). Within this framework, the grandmother, Mama, emerges as a bastion of traditional values and indigenous knowledge, contrasting with Ada, who embodies youthful aspirations for autonomy and self-expression. This thematic dialectic mirrors the ongoing debate surrounding cultural integrity in an era of globalising pressures, which, according to Crane (2016, pp.1-25), is rooted theoretically in cultural imperialism, which in the

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case of Nigeria seems to rub off more on the youth as reflected in Ada's behaviour, perhaps due to youthful exuberance. Beyond the binary of tradition versus modernity, the film delves into broader socio-cultural themes, including gender dynamics and communal interdependence. These thematic concerns align with the philosophical underpinnings of Afrocentric humanism, as theorised by Kwame Gyekye (2004, pp. 1–15), which foregrounds the communal nature of African societies and the intricate balance between individual aspirations and collective responsibilities.

The film's narrative is structured around Ada's journey of self-actualisation amidst competing familial and societal expectations. Her relationship with Mama is emblematic of the intergenerational transmission of cultural values, reinforcing the African worldview that privileges reciprocal responsibilities between elders and the younger generation (Muia et al., 2013, pp. 1–10). The film critically examines this interplay between autonomy and obligation, positioning Ada's struggle as a microcosm of broader social negotiations between preservation and change. The resolution—Ada's reconciliation of her aspirations with her cultural heritage—speaks to the adaptability of Nigerian identity in the face of globalisation (Ngare, 2023, p. 295). The narrative's structural coherence ensures that this thematic resolution remains nuanced rather than didactic, subtly reinforcing the film's central philosophical inquiries into cultural cohesion and personal agency. The interactions between Ada, Maama, and Obinna further illuminate Nollywood's penchant for embedding intricate familial and societal commentaries within its storytelling.

Take Me to Maama (2002) offers a compelling meditation on family as the bedrock of Nigerian social structures. Featuring a cast that includes Enebeli Elebuwa, Emmanuel France, Tony Goodman, Ashley Nwosu, and Saint Obi, the film roots its narrative in the cultural specificity of Nigerian communal living. The intergenerational tensions depicted in the film serve as a lens through which broader societal frictions—particularly the clash between traditional norms and

modern imperatives—are examined. In addition to its focus on family dynamics, the film confronts socio-economic realities, gendered expectations, and the broader implications of cultural dislocation. This multi-layered approach firmly situates *Take Me to Maama* (2002) within the canon of Nollywood films that transcend mere entertainment, instead engaging with deeper questions of identity, belonging, and cultural evolution.

Visually, the film employs a sophisticated aesthetic that accentuates the vibrancy of Nigerian cultural expressions. The mise-en-scène foregrounds traditional attire, ceremonial gatherings, and the natural beauty of Nigeria's landscapes, reinforcing the film's cultural grounding. The recurring motif of a woven mat—an heirloom passed through generations—functions as a potent visual metaphor for continuity and interconnectedness, embodying the film's central preoccupation with heritage and change (Jonathan, Attah, and Dansonka, 2024, p. 844).

The cinematographic juxtaposition of familial intimacy with the urban milieu's frenetic chaos further enhances the thematic tension between tradition and modernity, offering a visually evocative tableau that resonates with audiences within and beyond Nigeria.

Nolly12 observes that 'more recently, Nollywood seems to be doing better than before. In today's movies, they project more of a colourful, positive, romantic, suspense-filled side of things.' While *Take Me to Maama* (2002) precedes this current phase, it nonetheless exemplifies this evolutionary arc by integrating emotional depth with cultural authenticity. The film's engagement with these concerns aligns with Nollywood's expanding narrative scope, which seeks to balance innovation with cultural specificity. Nolly20 reinforces this, stating that 'Films, like *Take Me to Maama* (2002), highlight Nollywood's growth in storytelling sophistication while staying rooted in African realities. The industry must continue to innovate without losing sight of these cultural

foundations.' This critical perspective positions *Take Me to Maama* as a product of its time and a precursor to contemporary Nollywood's refined approach to storytelling.

Fundamentally, *Take Me to Maama* (2002) extends beyond the mere cinematic spectacle, engaging with pressing philosophical and socio-cultural debates surrounding identity, heritage, and transformation (Nwauche, 2017, p. 201). The film's thematic resonance, narrative structure, and visual semiotics coalesce to produce a deeply reflective work that captures the complexities of Nigerian life. The film encapsulates the dialectical balance at the heart of Nigerian culture by foregrounding traditional values while embracing modern imperatives. As Nolly12 aptly articulates, Nollywood's mission remains to craft stories that are 'authentic, creative, and culturally rich.' *Take Me to Maama* (2002) embodies this objective with commendable finesse, offering an intellectually stimulating and emotionally compelling cinematic experience. It affirms Nollywood's potency as a vehicle for articulating African narratives globally.

3.1.11 Review and Analysis: *Oloture* (2023)

Daniel Etim Effiong's *Oloture* (2023), with a running time of 103 minutes, boldly explores the grim realities of human trafficking in Nigeria. The film follows the journey of a young journalist, Oloture, who goes undercover to expose a human trafficking ring, only to find herself entangled in the dangerous world she is investigating. The title, *Oloture*, meaning endurance in the Idoma language, symbolises the protagonist's perseverance in unveiling the dark underbelly of a morally complex Nigerian society. Juxtaposing this stark narrative against Nigeria's vibrant storytelling heritage, the film emerges as a cinematic triumph, echoing themes of resilience and adversity deeply embedded in Nigerian oral and literary traditions. Scholars such as Otiono (2021) have underscored the potency of Nigerian storytelling in addressing societal challenges. Otiono highlights how these traditions extend beyond entertainment to function as social critique and

change mechanisms. Nigerian storytelling often grapples with corruption, inequality, and endurance themes, providing a framework for reflection and dialogue (Okibe, 2024, pp.474-483). *Oloture* (2023) exemplifies this by presenting an unflinching portrayal of exploitation and survival, thereby informing and raising awareness about the issue of human trafficking.

Thematically, the film's narrative encapsulates broader societal struggles. Themes of integrity and resistance are deeply embedded in *Oloture* (2023), portraying characters' resilience in confronting adversities that mirror a national survival ethos against overwhelming odds. This aligns with Akoh et al. (2022, pp. 35-55), who argue that narratives of hardship and perseverance are central to Nigerian cultural heritage, instilling ethical and moral values amidst trials. The protagonist's experiences highlight the interplay between vulnerability and strength, a motif recurrent in traditional Nigerian storytelling.

From a theoretical standpoint, Afrocentricity offers a pertinent lens for analysing *Oloture* (2023). Afrocentrist scholar Chawane (2016, pp.78-99) asserts that one of the significant achievements of Afrocentricity is the abolition of the slave trade, underscoring the necessity of ensuring such a past does not reoccur. The film's Afrocentric approach reclaims this historical trauma by shedding light on contemporary human trafficking, an issue that remains underexplored in Nigerian cinema. By centring an African perspective, the film disrupts dominant global narratives, such as Eurocentric media and cinematic portrayals, which frequently frame Africa through lenses of poverty, corruption, and helplessness, thereby marginalising African voices and agency in global discourses on exploitation and resistance (Hallen, 2020; Adesokan, 2011). This repositioning asserts a counter-hegemonic stance that empowers the audience by reclaiming interpretive authority, allowing African experiences and cultural values to define their own realities. Familusi (2020, pp. 1-4) stresses the importance of situating characters within their

Indigenous cultural contexts, and *Oloture's* narrative successfully weaves this cultural tapestry, juxtaposing traditional values with contemporary challenges.

Oloture (2023) stands apart in Nollywood's landscape, addressing one of its frequent criticisms—the superficial treatment of social issues. Respondents such as Nolly13 emphasise the importance of in-depth research and collaboration with cultural experts to ensure authentic representations of Nigerian realities. Nolly13 explicitly critiques Nollywood for often 'glossing over cultural authenticity' and urges scriptwriters to prioritise layered storytelling, as seen in *Oloture* (2023). The film, therefore, effectively counters this critique, presenting a richly textured narrative that interweaves complex social issues with cultural specificity.

A visual and narrative analysis reveals the film's effectiveness in portraying the harsh realities of human trafficking without resorting to reductive stereotypes. The cinematography employs stark contrasts and muted tones to underscore the grim nature of its subject matter, aligning with Nolly20's advocacy for 'high production values and sophisticated storytelling techniques.' The visual language enhances the film's thematic depth, creating an immersive experience that resonates emotionally and intellectually. *Oloture's* narrative structure also aligns with Nigerian storytelling traditions, which blend morality tales with social critique. This resonates with Ukhami's (2023) assertion that storytelling functions as both cultural preservation and a tool for societal transformation. By addressing human trafficking, *Oloture* (2023) not only raises awareness but also incites critical discussions on systemic socio-political issues, embodying the transformative power of storytelling highlighted by Friedmann and Ezepue (2023, pp. 247-368), effectively portraying the impact of societal challenges. This narrative encourages viewers to reflect on and engage with these issues, reinforcing the importance of cultural storytelling in driving change.

A content analysis of the film affirms its commitment to authenticity and depth. Respondents such as Nolly13 lament Nollywood's 'tendency to oversimplify narratives' and advocate for a more nuanced balance between tradition and modernity. *Oloture's* scriptwriters pre-emptively tackle these concerns by exploring the socio-economic drivers of human trafficking, crafting multidimensional characters with compelling backstories. The film's ability to interweave traditional and contemporary influences aligns with Nolly20's advocacy for narratives honouring Nigerian cultural heritage while engaging with present realities. Furthermore, the film's thematic richness, which extends to its representation of Nigeria's diverse cultural landscape, engages the audience and underscores Nollywood's potential as a vehicle for representing the richness of Nigerian experiences.

Incorporating audience responses and scholarly perspectives, *Oloture* (2023) epitomises Nollywood's evolving ability to project contemporary and traditional Nigerian heritage onto the global stage. The film transcends mere entertainment, functioning as a cultural artefact safeguarding Nigeria's storytelling traditions. Alfa and Ker (2024, pp. 74-94) highlight cinema's role in preserving cultural heritage, and *Oloture's* narrative exemplifies this principle. Beyond its impact within Nigeria, the film has amplified global awareness of human trafficking, reinforcing Nollywood's position as an influential medium of social discourse. By bridging tradition and modernity, the film captures the complexity of Nigerian society, offering a culturally anchored yet universally resonant narrative. *Oloture's* success lies in its capacity to balance authenticity with innovation, cementing its status as a significant contribution to contemporary Nigerian cinema. The film reaffirms the potency of storytelling as a catalyst for social change and cultural preservation. As Nolly20 asserts, 'Nollywood's future depends on crafting authentic, diverse, and meaningful narratives'—a vision that *Oloture* (2023) powerfully actualises.

3.1.12 Review and Analysis of *Lakatabu* (2024)

Odunlade Adekola's *Lakatabu* (2024), a pivotal addition to Nollywood's expanding cinematic landscape, is a 111-minute film that exemplifies the industry's continuous efforts to embed Nigerian culture within its storytelling traditions. The film follows the life of Lakatabu, a supernatural antagonist whose reign of terror—characterised by kidnapping and murder—culminates in his eventual downfall. Despite its commitment to cultural specificity, the film's reliance on familiar tropes such as the hero's journey and predictable arcs like the redemption of the antagonist has drawn criticism. Respondent Nolly26 observes, 'I have watched several Nollywood movies; watching *Lakatabu*, for instance, at the cinema, I observed it aligns with a pattern in Nollywood storytelling that often employs well-trodden narratives with little innovation, reflecting either half-baked stories or a good beginning marred by weak conclusions.' However, Miller (2016) challenges such critiques, arguing that Nollywood's informal yet evolving structure allows for continuous improvement in storytelling, demonstrating a maturing industry.

The film's extensive use of Yoruba language, traditional attire, and spiritual references reinforces its Afrocentric identity, positioning African perspectives at the core of its narrative. This approach aligns with Afrocentric theorists such as Oloruntobi (2024), who advocate for minimising Western influences to retain the authenticity of Nigerian storytelling. Nolly29 supports this notion, asserting that Nollywood should focus on projecting indigenous knowledge systems rather than conforming to Western cinematic standards. The supernatural elements in *Lakatabu*—including incantations and traditional rituals—serve as powerful affirmations of Yoruba spirituality, challenging the hegemony of Western filmmaking norms and religion. The film's portrayal of spiritual justice, a theme central to African narrative structures, reflects Nollywood's

continued engagement with moral retribution, fostering a sense of connection with the film thematic concerns (Oloruntobi, 2024).

From a feminist theoretical perspective, *Lakatabu* (2024) problematises gender representation, particularly in portraying women. The abducted daughter of the herbalist, primarily used as a bargaining chip, highlights the persistent issue of female agency within Nollywood narratives. This reinforces the concerns raised by Nolly29, who remarks, 'Women are hardly presented as heroes in Nollywood, and that bothers me.' The film's depiction of women as victims, where they are often used as pawns in the power struggles of male characters, underscores a broader trend in Nollywood, where female characters frequently serve as passive subjects rather than active agents. This calls for a re-examination of gender roles in Nollywood to elevate female characters beyond conventional archetypes and to explore underrepresented narratives that empower women (Uchenunu and Ramson, 2021).

The film effectively juxtaposes the tranquillity of everyday life with the chaos of crime and supernatural terror, reflecting Nigeria's socio-political tensions. As Nolly26 observes, *Lakatabu* (2024) mirrors contemporary Nigerian issues, particularly crime and justice, fostering audience engagement with its narrative. The narrative's reliance on culturally resonant imagery underscores Nollywood's increasing emphasis on showcasing unadulterated Nigerian heritage to global audiences, as observed by Ihentuge (2024). This represents a significant shift towards cultural preservation within Nollywood's global aspirations, aligning with the industry's broader efforts to assert its identity on the international stage.

Despite occasional predictability in its storytelling, *Lakatabu* (2024) is a testament to the richness of Nollywood's cultural narratives. Its visual immersion and thematic depth highlight the industry's commitment to balancing local authenticity with global cinematic appeal. While gender

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representation and narrative innovation remain areas for development, the film reflects Nollywood's progress in leveraging Indigenous storytelling for international recognition. As Maku et al. (2024, pp. 223-237) assert, Nollywood's ability to blend cultural authenticity with contemporary cinematic expectations will determine its long-term success. The reception and broader impact of *Lakatabu* (2024) within Nollywood provide a crucial lens for assessing the industry's trajectory and potential to influence future productions.

3.2 Conclusion

This chapter has critically examined selected Nollywood films, engaging with their thematic concerns and the respondents' perspectives gathered through questionnaires. The analysis of films such as *Basorun Gaa* (2004), *Things Fall Apart* (1987), *Iyore* (2015), *Queen Amina* (2021), *Living in Bondage* (1992), *Take Me to Maama* (2002), and *Oloture* (2019) reveals the evolving trajectory of Nollywood as a site of cultural preservation, historical interrogation, and social critique. The insights from anonymised respondents further highlight the dynamic interplay between Nollywood's narrative structures and audience reception, underscoring the industry's capacity to reflect and influence societal discourse.

A comparative analysis of these films reveals Nollywood's dual engagement with tradition and modernity. Historical epics such as *Things Fall Apart* (1987) and *Queen Amina* (2021) offer cinematic reconstructions of Nigeria's past, while contemporary narratives like *Living in Bondage* (1992) and *Oloture* (2019) address emergent socio-cultural challenges. The former category reinforces communal values and identity formation by drawing upon mytho-historical legacies. In contrast, the latter operates within the framework of Afro-modernity, tackling issues such as materialism, gender roles, and transnational exploitation.

Furthermore, respondents' perspectives underscore the extent to which Nollywood serves as both a vessel for heritage preservation and a medium for socio-political critique. As seen in *Basorun Gaa* (2004), the didactic potential of true-life adaptations reinforces moral imperatives such as humility and respect for authority, aligning with Nollywood's role in sustaining indigenous ethical frameworks. Meanwhile, films like *Take Me to Maama* (2002) navigate the interstices of generational conflict, illuminating the tensions between cultural continuity and personal aspirations. *Oloture* (2019), in contrast, represents a departure from more traditional Nollywood storytelling by engaging with global human rights discourses, foregrounding Nollywood's increasing alignment with transnational cinema in addressing issues such as human trafficking.

The juxtaposition of these films thus underscores Nollywood's narrative plurality—its ability to oscillate between historical reverence and contemporary urgency, between cultural specificity and universal resonance. While certain films rely on conventional tropes, as noted in critiques of *Lakatabu* (2024), others, such as *Oloture* (2019), exhibit a more radical aesthetic and thematic ambition, pushing the boundaries of Nollywood's cinematic language. This contrast illustrates the industry's fluidity, showcasing its adaptability and resilience and reflecting its strengths and limitations in crafting narratives that balance authenticity with innovation.

 In sum, the films examined in this study collectively affirm Nollywood's pivotal role in shaping and interrogating Nigerian identity. By preserving historical memory, engaging with contemporary socio-political realities, and resonating with both local and diasporic audiences, Nollywood sustains its position as a vital force within global cinema. The feedback from respondents reinforces the view that Nollywood must continue evolving—maintaining its cultural essence while embracing new forms of storytelling that deepen its global relevance. As the industry moves forward, the challenge remains to balance cultural fidelity and cinematic modernisation,

which underscores Nollywood's potential as both a custodian of Nigerian heritage and a progressive force in global storytelling.

Chapter Four

4 Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the collected data and provides an extensive elaboration on the findings. It summarises interview outcomes from participants, relating these results to existing literature while examining how they engage with the overarching themes of the thesis. Although the primary focus is on the data, this chapter aims to thoroughly explore the broader implications of the findings. The objective is to contribute significantly and meaningfully to the Nollywood industry and Nigerian heritage, demonstrating how the information aligns with the ambitions of the thesis. Additionally, this chapter positions the findings as a valuable resource for professional knowledge, serving as an academic reference point by illustrating how language use, symbolism, and recurring patterns—identified through data coding and interpretation—contribute to the thematic significance, followed by an in-depth analysis of these themes.

4.2 Language and Symbolism in Nollywood Films

This section builds on the coding process in the previous chapter by demonstrating how Nollywood films embed key themes through language and symbolism (See figure 14). Rather than presenting themes in isolation, the table illustrates how they materialise within narratives, character portrayals, and cinematic techniques, deepening the analysis of Nigerian heritage and Nollywood's industry dynamics.

For instance, the theme of cultural heritage preservation, identified in coding, is realised through *Storyline*, which weaves personal and collective histories and *Sayings* which reinforce

cultural wisdom through proverbs. Likewise, societal instability is acknowledged and vividly represented through *Insecurity* and *Thuggery*, reflecting real-world struggles within character experiences.

Going beyond thematic exploration, the table plays a pivotal role in refining our understanding of Nollywood's structural and economic realities. Terms like *Directing*, *Crew*, and *Actors* provide a clear overview of the industry's inner workings, while *Money* and *Payment* shed light on the financial barriers and power dynamics that influence film narratives and industry operations.

This section strengthens the data analysis by linking coded themes to linguistic and symbolic frameworks. It shows how Nollywood actively constructs and reinforces narratives of Nigerian heritage. This insight deepens the study's findings and contributes to broader academic and industry discussions on storytelling, identity, and socio-economic structures within Nollywood.

Term	Context / Insight
Actors	Pivotal in conveying emotional depth and cultural authenticity, representing societal norms and challenges.
Crew	Highlights the collaborative nature of filmmaking, often focusing on the behind-the-scenes struggles of technical staff and actors.
Culture	Represents Nigeria's diverse cultural landscapes, norms, traditions, and practices depicted in Nollywood films.

Term	Context / Insight
Directing	Represents the director's role in shaping narratives, ensuring cultural integrity, and creating symbolic meanings through film techniques.
Heritage	Reflects Nigerian culture, values, and traditions, often explored in relation to preserving cultural memory and identity.
Insecurity	Highlights social and political instability in Nigerian society, reflected in characters' fears or societal unrest.
Money	Represents both the material struggles of characters and the financial constraints of the industry. It often symbolises power, greed, and social mobility.
Payment	Symbolises financial transactions and economic realities of the industry, often tied to ethical dilemmas faced by characters.
Sayings	Incorporates proverbs, idioms, and local expressions, serving as vehicles for cultural wisdom and ethical lessons.
Script	Refers to the written dialogue and structure of Nollywood films, often combining traditional storytelling with modern cinematic techniques.
Storyline	Central to Nollywood films, the storyline provides the framework for conveying cultural narratives and societal issues. It often blends personal struggles with collective heritage.
Supportive	Depicts solidarity and community, where familial or communal support is crucial in overcoming challenges.

Term	Context / Insight
Violence	Symbolises societal corruption and violence, often critiquing the breakdown of societal values.

Figure 14: The identified language and symbolism in the study (Author's work, 2024).

4.3 Summary of Research Findings and Interview Analysis

This section offers a comprehensive analysis and synthesis of insights derived from interviews with Nollywood practitioners. These insights are categorised thematically based on alignment in perspectives. The semi-structured interview approach, which balanced structured inquiry and open-ended responses, allowed participants to articulate their experiences in-depth. This methodological flexibility proved instrumental in elucidating Nollywood's role in preserving and reshaping Nigerian heritage, offering critical insights into its contributions to cultural preservation, societal influence, and the challenges it encounters.

The findings reveal distinct thematic patterns, illustrating how Nollywood practitioners perceive and engage with the industry's role in reflecting and shaping Nigerian traditions, values, and identity. These insights are systematically aligned with the broader research objectives, ensuring a robust and contextually relevant understanding of the industry's evolving significance. Furthermore, participants delineate key challenges and opportunities within Nollywood, including financial constraints, the implications of globalisation, the expansion of digital platforms, and increasing international recognition.

This analysis underscores Nollywood's dynamic and evolving role in shaping and sustaining Nigerian heritage. It highlights the industry's capacity to reinforce cultural continuity while adapting to contemporary societal transformations and global influences.

4.4 Data Analysis
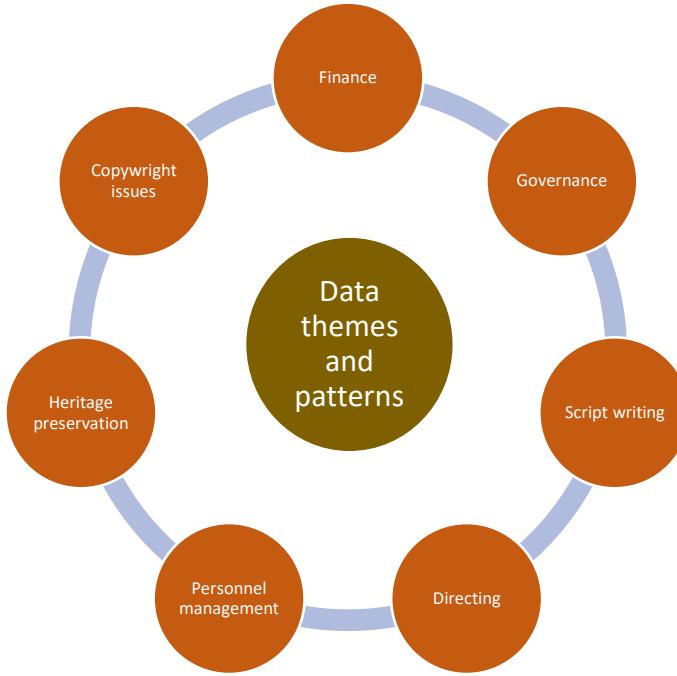
Figure 15: Shows the main identified data themes and patterns (Author's work, 2024).

The analysis, which delves into finance, scriptwriting, copyright issues, heritage preservation, personnel management, directing, and governance (See Figure 15), has revealed several key findings. These include additional sub-themes such as insecurity, lack of access to equipment and technology, sexual harassment, and discrimination. These findings underscore the industry's challenges, heritage preservation efforts, and storytelling techniques.

It's crucial to understand the gravity of the financial constraints, technological limitations, and skill development gaps that Nollywood faces. Despite these formidable obstacles, Nollywood

has demonstrated remarkable resilience. It has not only adapted to production and distribution challenges but also reinforced its role in preserving Nigerian heritage through film.

Securing funding remains a significant challenge for filmmakers. For instance, the Bank of Industry in Nigeria imposes bureaucratic delays, stringent loan requirements, inadequate risk assessment frameworks, and limited outreach, creating barriers to accessing capital. These constraints hinder industry growth and restrict market expansion. Bureaucratic inefficiencies delay funding, while rigid loan requirements deter filmmakers, particularly given the inherent risks of the Nigerian film market. Interviewee Aja Lekwa noted, 'The challenges faced by Nollywood filmmakers make it difficult to penetrate international markets and form meaningful foreign collaborations. Without addressing these issues, the industry remains limited in its global reach.' Limited funding further impacts budget management, constraining international revenue potential and impeding Nollywood's integration into the global film economy. Nonetheless, there has been some progress in expanding its international footprint.

Copyright infringement emerged as a pressing issue, leading to significant revenue losses due to unauthorised distribution. In our interview, Friday Francis underscored this issue, stating, 'This leads to significant revenue losses for filmmakers due to unauthorised distribution.' Weak legal frameworks and poor enforcement mechanisms leave filmmakers vulnerable, exacerbated by a lack of legal support and intellectual property rights awareness. Strengthening policies and enhancing education in these areas are imperative for the industry's sustainability.

The need for improved governance in Nollywood is not just important, it's urgent. Governance perspectives varied among respondents, with many advocating for more excellent government support. However, historical hindrances were highlighted, with an interviewee, Mactaiwo, remarking. 'If you look at it in history, the government has clamped down more on

Nollywood than helped it,' referencing military-era censorship. In contemporary democratic Nigeria, the need for an enabling environment remains pressing. Elechi reinforced this: 'The government urgently needs to support us with an enabling environment to thrive so we can shoot our movies in a secure and safe environment without fear of being attacked by thugs and hoodlums.' The shift to digital platforms and streaming services presents opportunities and regulatory challenges. Industry policies, such as the proposed MOPICON bill, highlight ongoing debates about governmental regulation and its implications for filmmakers.

The data further illuminated industry challenges, including access to quality equipment, technological advancements, talent availability, production logistics, infrastructure, and distribution networks. Market access, regulatory barriers, and the need for more excellent filmmaker education were recurring themes. John Chizoba Vincent emphasised crew wellbeing: 'When the crew is supported, the entire production thrives. Without proper treatment, everything suffers. The foundation of success lies in caring for those who make it happen.'

Questionnaire responses revealed diverse patterns in Nollywood movies, providing insights into its contribution to Nigerian heritage. Nolly05 argued, 'For Nollywood to support Nigerian heritage truly, it must expand its storytelling beyond the three dominant ethnic groups—Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo,' rating current efforts at 50% success. Nolly07 reinforced financial constraints as a significant obstacle, while Jovial James highlighted the unequal distribution of resources, stating, 'Most times, people want to invest in something already big,' reflecting systemic barriers faced by emerging filmmakers.

This comprehensive analysis underscores Nollywood's pivotal role in cultural heritage preservation while revealing structural, financial, and regulatory challenges. These structural

challenges include issues related to industry organisation, distribution networks, and infrastructure development, all of which impact the industry's ability to function and grow.

4.5 Analysis of Interviews

The interviews were conducted over Teams, as detailed in Chapter 2. This section synthesises insights from industry professionals, exploring Nollywood's role in cultural preservation, storytelling evolution, representation challenges, globalisation, gender dynamics, government relations, and financial constraints. Both areas of consensus and points of contention emerge from these discussions.

Industry professional Stlivingstone Ekanem stated that 'Nollywood functions as a custodian of Nigerian heritage, transmitting cultural values and traditions.' Echoing this perspective, Bankole highlighted the industry's contribution to mitigating cultural erosion, particularly through safeguarding traditional storytelling and indigenous languages, aligning with Adedeji-Olona et al. (2024). Together, these viewpoints underscore Nollywood's significant role in preserving Indigenous heritage and countering colonial narratives.

However, not all perspectives were entirely positive. While Bankole praised Nollywood's cultural commitment, Friday Francis offered a more critical lens on how these representations are crafted and received. This tension between cultural presentation and audience perception can be contextualised using Mosley et al. (2024), whose research on cultural appropriation suggests that audience judgments are shaped by whether a cultural exchange is perceived as harmful or beneficial. Applying this framework, criticisms arise that Nollywood's commercial storytelling may sometimes appear to exploit culture for profit, prompting audiences to question its authenticity.

Francis further observed that 'storytelling in Nollywood balances traditional and contemporary influences,' a view supported by Bankole and aligned with Afrocentric theories (Asante, 2003). Adding further nuance, James raised concerns that 'excessive reliance on technology could erode the essence of cultural storytelling,' highlighting potential tensions between modern techniques and traditional narrative forms. Extending this discussion, Cephas criticised commercial pressures, arguing that 'profit-driven motives often compromise narrative depth and originality.

The issue of representation in Nollywood remains divisive. James emphasised the need for 'cultural alignment in casting,' reflecting how media shapes and communicates cultural meanings. Hall's (1997) work on media representation provides a useful conceptual lens. Although developed in a Western context, the processes of meaning-making and audience interpretation in Nollywood operate in ways broadly similar to those Hall describes, illustrating how producers embed cultural meanings that audiences decode. At the same time, Nollywood presents distinct conditions that differentiate it from the contexts Hall studied. The industry is highly regionalised, operates across multiple languages, and is shaped by specific socio-political and cultural dynamics that influence both production and reception. Dike (2023) observes comparable local challenges, including miscasting, typecasting, and entrenched favouritism, which continue to limit diversity and the recognition of new talent. Together, these insights demonstrate both the theoretical and local dimensions of representation, highlighting the ongoing effort to achieve inclusivity and cultural authenticity in Nollywood.

Nollywood's expansion into global markets presents both opportunities and risks. On the one hand, professionals like Cephas and Lekwa stressed the necessity of 'professional training to maintain cultural integrity while meeting global standards.' On the other hand, Nwojiji, aligning

with Insan (2023), warned against the pitfalls of cultural commodification, cautioning that 'prioritising profit over authenticity might erode the industry's unique identity.'

Gender representation in Nollywood is a deeply contested issue. While Nwojiji highlighted 'ongoing sexual exploitation', linking this to coercive casting practices that often involve implicit or explicit demands for sexual compliance and disproportionately affect female actors, these exploitative dynamics reflect entrenched structural inequalities in the industry that shape power relations, access to roles, and the conditions under which women participate in film production. This aligns with Mulvey's (1975, pp. 6–18) concept of the male gaze, which illustrates how cinematic structures can objectify women and influence audience perception of gender roles. In contrast, Elechi called for the creation of 'empowering narratives to challenge stereotypes,' emphasising the transformative potential of film to not only reflect but also reshape societal attitudes toward women. Together, these perspectives expose a dual imperative: to confront exploitative production practices and to reimagine narrative frameworks that resist objectification and affirm agency. The consensus underscores the urgent need for systemic changes to promote gender equity within the industry, including institutional reforms and narrative interventions that address both representation and underlying production practices.

Nollywood's relationship with the Nigerian government remains strained. Mactaiwo criticised the 'lack of formal support,' citing inadequate funding, censorship, and limited industry backing as significant impediments. However, despite these constraints, Nollywood continues to thrive, 'fostering independent storytelling and contributing to cultural decolonisation.'

Economic challenges significantly impact Nollywood's sustainability. Bankole and Lekwa agreed on the urgent need for 'improved funding and stronger anti-piracy measures.' While Bankole advocated for 'increased investment to drive industry growth,' Lekwa highlighted

'piracy's detrimental effects on profitability and investment incentives,' underscoring the tension between expansion and financial viability.

This thematic synthesis underscores Nollywood's resilience and cultural significance, revealing a complex interplay of 'tradition and modernity, opportunity and risk, and empowerment and exploitation.' While industry professionals largely agree on Nollywood's vital role in shaping Nigerian identity, contrasting perspectives on authenticity, representation, and sustainability reflect ongoing debates within the industry. The next segment focuses on the analysis of poll results.

4.6 Analysis of Poll Results

The poll was conducted online, as detailed in Chapter 2. The poll results, a significant reflection of diverse respondent perspectives, underscore the profound cultural and societal impact of Nollywood. Among the 262 participants, 85.4% agreed that Nollywood significantly influences Nigerian heritage, while 15.7% disagreed. This overwhelming approval highlights Nollywood's pivotal role in preserving and shaping Nigeria's cultural legacy, serving as both an entertainment medium and a cultural ambassador. Similarly, 86.3% of respondents agreed that Nollywood contributes to society's moral consciousness, while 13.7% disagreed. This substantial agreement reinforces the perception that Nollywood is more than just a film industry; it also acts as a moral compass, reflecting and shaping societal values.

Despite these positive perceptions, the poll revealed areas where audiences feel Nollywood could improve. For instance, 31.3% of respondents emphasised improving storytelling quality, recognising the importance of richer narratives to sustain viewer engagement. Another 15.3% suggested a focus on more innovative themes, pointing to the potential for Nollywood to push creative boundaries and explore fresh ideas. Additionally, 11.8% highlighted the need to increase

budget allocations for higher production quality, while 4.2% underscored the value of filming in iconic locations to enhance visual appeal. Notably, most respondents (57.7%) advocated for these improvements, reflecting the audience's demand for a comprehensive and holistic approach to advancing the industry.

These findings suggest that while Nollywood has made significant strides in cultural preservation and societal influence, its audience expects further innovation and technical enhancement. The focus on storytelling and creative innovation indicates a strong desire for Nollywood to blend its rich cultural heritage with more compelling narratives, meeting the audience's expectations. Similarly, calls for better funding and filming locations reflect the need to elevate Nollywood's production standards to match the expectations of an increasingly globalised film market. The detailed breakdown of responses (See Figure 16) provides actionable insights for Nollywood's stakeholders. Addressing these audience-driven priorities, such as the need for Nollywood to embrace strategic investments and creative evolution, can enable the industry to meet expectations better, sustain its cultural influence, and enhance its global competitiveness. Nollywood must evolve creatively and strategically invest to remain a dynamic and impactful force in local and international film markets. Further reflections regarding the details of this analysis are provided in the comparison sections after the questionnaire analysis.
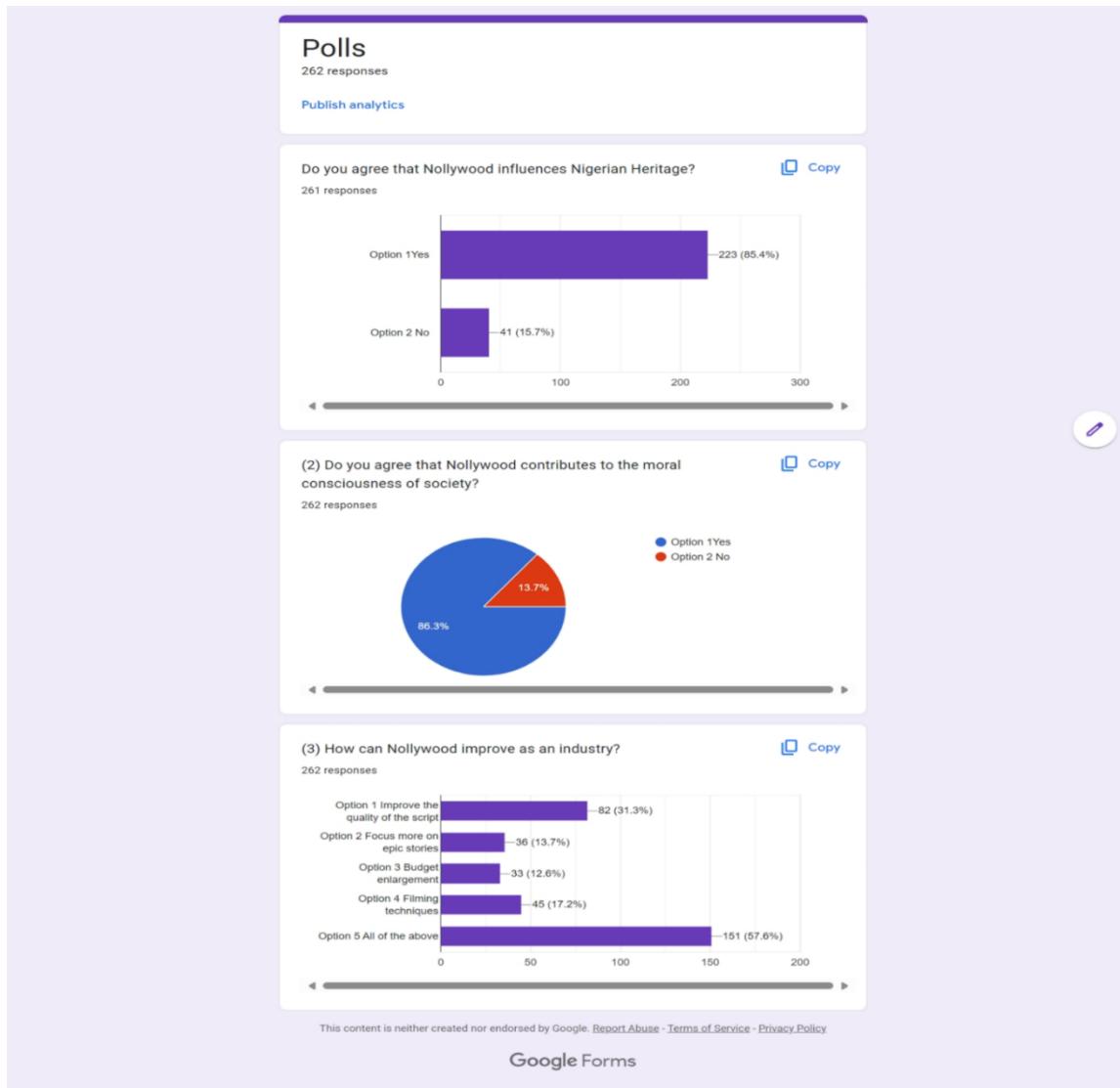
Figure 16: Shows the voting pattern for the poll (Author's work, 2024).

Analysis of Questionnaire

Chapter 2 outlines the methodology used for this questionnaire, including its distribution via email. Refer to that section for details.

The questionnaire responses offer a unique, multidimensional understanding of Nollywood's internal structure. They reveal interconnected concerns regarding financial limitations, cultural representation, governance, and industry ethics. Unlike the poll analysis, which reflects broad audience sentiment, these responses provide a more intricate perspective from those embedded in the industry's daily realities.

A dominant concern was the persistent struggle for sustainable financing. While some, like Nolly07, lamented the lack of structured funding mechanisms, keeping the industry in a cycle of modest productions, others, such as Nolly21, pointed to new opportunities arising from digital streaming platforms. However, concerns over whether these platforms truly translate into financial sustainability tempered optimism about global exposure. Nolly12 reinforced this dilemma: 'While online platforms have increased visibility, many filmmakers still struggle to recoup investments due to weak monetisation models.' The discussion thus highlights a paradox—while Nollywood's global reach is expanding, financial insecurity remains a core issue.

Cultural representation was another contested area. While Nolly05 critiqued the over-reliance on dominant ethnic narratives, advocating for greater inclusivity, Nolly11 acknowledged gradual progress in diverse storytelling. This debate reflects Nollywood's balancing act between commercial viability and authentic cultural expression. Nolly18 added, 'Producers often assume audiences prefer familiar narratives, but there is a growing demand for more nuanced depictions

of Nigeria's cultural diversity.' While some believe the industry is straying from its cultural roots, others see a slow but promising evolution toward more affluent, more representative narratives.

Similarly, governance and policy frameworks elicited mixed reactions. Nolly14 expressed frustration over the gap between policy rhetoric and actual implementation, while Nolly19 acknowledged emerging, albeit slow, government initiatives. This contrast underscores the broader tension between industry self-sufficiency and the role of institutional support in Nollywood's future. Nolly22 remarked, 'There are government funds available, but bureaucratic bottlenecks make them nearly inaccessible to the average filmmaker.'

Ethical concerns and professional development rounded out the key issues. Disparities in access to training and career progression, as highlighted by Nolly28, illustrate the uneven playing field within the industry. However, Nolly30 provided a more grassroots perspective, suggesting that practitioners are responsible for mentoring emerging talent rather than waiting for large-scale reforms. Nolly25 echoed this sentiment: 'The industry is filled with informal learning, but structured mentorship programmes would accelerate professional growth for aspiring creatives.'

These perspectives illustrate an industry at a crossroads—striving for global relevance while contending with deep-rooted structural challenges. The varied responses converge on a central idea: Nollywood holds immense potential, but achieving sustainable progress is contingent on a more cohesive approach to financial models, cultural authenticity, policy enforcement, and ethical industry practices. The need for change is urgent.

4.6.1 Comparative Analysis of Data Sources and Their Research Relevance

This section synthesises findings from interviews (See Figure 22), questionnaires (See Figure 21), polls (See Figure 16), films, and secondary sources, i.e., literature, to evaluate Nollywood's role in preserving Nigerian heritage through storytelling. The triangulation of these sources reveals the significant financial, cultural, and governance challenges Nollywood faces while identifying areas where perceptions and priorities diverge among stakeholders. As mentioned earlier, the financial constraints and industry challenges of insufficient funding emerged as a central theme across data sources. Questionnaire results indicated that 78% of respondents saw financial barriers as the industry's greatest challenge. Adebayo Bankole emphasised this in his interview: 'Without sustainable financing, we cannot produce the kinds of narratives that resonate globally. We are trapped in a cycle of low-budget production." A recurring observation was the cyclical nature of the low investment, leading to lower production quality and reduced global competitiveness; Jovial James noted, "Our biggest problem is not creativity but the money to bring those creative ideas to life.'

Although the majority of the combined respondents highlight financial problems as the most crucial, only a few are enthusiastic that the money needed can be generated, with only 11.8% of poll respondents suggesting that budget enlargement intervention through funding schemes could address this issue and only 20% of questionnaire respondents believed such measures would be effectively implemented even if funding is made available, reflecting a lack of confidence in institutional support. Questionnaire data reinforced this scepticism, with one participant, Nolly01, stating, 'The government should create funding pools for cultural projects, but their involvement has been mostly superficial.' While digital platforms and crowdfunding were frequently mentioned as potential solutions, the lack of infrastructure and technical skills to exploit these avenues

remains a significant limitation. Secondary sources, i.e., literature, align with these observations, emphasising Nollywood's struggle to balance quantity and quality in a competitive global market (Adeyemi and Olaniyi, 2023, pp. 45–46). The consistent repetition of this theme across sources suggests that addressing financial constraints is fundamental to unlocking Nollywood's cultural and economic potential.

Regarding cultural representation and heritage preservation, poll results indicated that 85.4% of respondents recognised Nollywood as a powerful medium for shaping perceptions of Nigerian heritage and culture. However, interviews and secondary data suggest this potential needs to be more utilised, albeit cautiously. Oluyomi Mactaiwo stated, 'Our stories carry the essence of who we are, but we must avoid exaggerations that turn our culture into mere spectacle.' This sentiment reflects a tension between authenticity and commodification, with some filmmakers prioritising marketability over heritage authenticity. Adedamola Jones argued for a balance: 'Nollywood's strength lies in merging the ancient with the modern, showing a Nigeria that is both rooted and evolving'.

Analysis of films like *Things Fall Apart* (1987) and *Iyore* (2015) supports these assertions, illustrating how proverbs, symbolism, and historical narratives can convey intangible heritage. One questionnaire respondent, Nolly06, remarked, 'Proverbs in Nollywood are not just decorative; they are a bridge to our past.' However, survey data revealed a divide in storytelling preferences: while 72% of respondents who favour traditional themes prioritised them, only 58% of those who appreciate contemporary narratives agreed, preferring stories that reflect modern Nigerian realities. This divergence suggests that Nollywood must strategically balance tradition and innovation to appeal to diverse audiences. This balance is difficult to achieve, underscoring the complexity of Nollywood's task. Secondary frameworks, such as Mazrui's framing of Africans as

custodians of cultural pride (1986, pp. 239–240), underscore the role of storytelling in fostering identity and continuity.

Governance issues, particularly inadequate regulatory frameworks, emerged as a critical theme. While 62% of questionnaire respondents identified the lack of institutional support as a barrier, qualitative data provided deeper insights. Ifeoma Jennifer Elechi argued, 'We need governance frameworks that encourage creativity while enforcing ethical standards. The industry is losing talent due to poor protection and exploitative practices.' Her critique suggests that Nollywood's growth is hindered by structural inefficiencies and ethical lapses, including piracy and inequitable compensation (Ndigwe, 2018, pp. 184–204).

Piracy, in particular, was a major concern, with 68% of respondents identifying it as a key factor undermining Nollywood's profitability. Responses to the proposed MOPICON bill revealed a divide: 47% believed it could enhance industry organisation, while 39% feared it would stifle creativity. Interviewees echoed these concerns, including Aja Nanna Lekwa, who stated, MOPICON, if done right, could create order, but we fear it might become another tool for bureaucracy.' This tension underscores the broader challenge of balancing regulation with creative freedom.

Secondary literature situates governance gaps within the broader struggles of postcolonial cultural industries, which often face the challenge of balancing autonomy with institutionalisation. Smith (2006, pp. 23–25) examines how these gaps reflect tensions between autonomy and institutional demands rooted in colonial legacies. These challenges highlight the lasting influence of historical inequities on contemporary cultural industries, shaping their processes and outcomes.

4.6.2 Convergence and Divergence of Findings

While Nollywood's role as a cultural ambassador is widely acknowledged, key divergences emerge across data sources regarding priorities and approaches to overcoming industry challenges. One central point of divergence lies in the perception of financial solutions. Although financial constraints are universally recognised, interviewees like Adebayo Bankole stress the necessity of more effective and sustainable funding mechanisms. While poll and questionnaire respondents express scepticism about the proposed interventions, the prospect of a more effective financial solution offers hope. The limited confidence in government or institutional funding schemes highlights a gap between industry professionals advocating for structured investment and audiences doubting its feasibility.

In the realm of cultural representation, generational differences further underscore divergence. While questionnaire and poll respondents overwhelmingly see Nollywood as a tool for heritage preservation, younger respondents lean towards contemporary narratives, whereas older participants favour traditional storytelling. Interviews provide additional depth to this split, with figures like Oluyomi Mactaiwo cautioning against over-commercialisation, whereas Adedamola Jones advocates a balanced approach, blending modern and traditional narratives to engage evolving audiences. This balanced approach takes into consideration the diverse preferences of the audience, making them feel considered in the storytelling process.

Governance and ethical concerns also reveal varying perspectives. While questionnaire data points to widespread dissatisfaction with regulatory structures, interviews provide more nuanced viewpoints on the risks of overregulation. The mixed reactions to the proposed MOPICON bill highlight this divide, with some respondents seeing it as a means of formalising industry standards, while others, like Aja Nanna Lekwa, fear it could hinder creative freedom. This

contrast reflects broader tensions between calls for structured governance and apprehensions about bureaucratic constraints.

Ultimately, these divergences illustrate the complexity of Nollywood's evolution. Stakeholders agree on its cultural significance, particularly in heritage preservation and global influence. However, they differ on strategies for financial sustainability, storytelling priorities, and governance models. Addressing these competing visions will be crucial for Nollywood's continued role in heritage preservation and global influence.

4.7 Historical Continuities and Structural Constraints

This section reinterprets the findings by situating them within the long-standing debates on structural, financial, and institutional issues that have shaped Nollywood since its inception. The challenges identified—such as inadequate funding, weak regulation, and inconsistent government intervention—are not novel discoveries but historically entrenched features of Nigeria's creative economy. These systemic realities, rooted in the nation's sociopolitical and economic landscape, continue to influence how the industry operates, adapts, and asserts cultural agency.

As Haynes (2016) notes in *Nollywood: The Cinema of Nigeria*, the industry's informal and entrepreneurial foundation emerged as a direct response to limited access to formal financing and infrastructure. Similarly, Haynes and Okome (2000) attribute these dynamics to the 1990s video-film revolution, during which filmmakers relied on improvisation and self-financing in the absence of state and institutional support. Larkin (2008) further situates these conditions within the broader political economy of Nigeria, demonstrating how infrastructural precarity and inconsistent governance have historically shaped cultural production. The persistence of these structural patterns means that Nollywood's current challenges are continuations of older systemic formations rather than signs of stagnation.

Importantly, these continuities reveal that Nollywood's adaptive strategies are not random improvisations but structured responses to enduring institutional voids. As Miller (2016) argues in *Nollywood Central*, what appears as informality in the Nigerian video-film sector often conceals a sophisticated and organised production logic designed to circumvent systemic inefficiencies. The interview data from this study reinforce this reading: figures such as Adebayo Bankole and Friday Francis highlight how filmmakers develop intricate financing networks, community-based production models, and digital strategies to sustain operations under conditions of uncertainty.

The notion of adaptation and creative agency within structural constraints aligns with Krings and Okome's (2013) argument in *Global Nollywood*, which posits that informality functions as both a limitation and a liberation. This condition simultaneously restricts and enables innovation. This duality was echoed across the interviews, where participants described informal financing and distribution systems not merely as survival tactics but as spaces of entrepreneurial freedom and experimentation. Such practices exemplify what Lobato (2019) calls 'shadow economies of cinema,' where creative industries in the Global South sustain themselves through unregulated yet highly efficient networks that operate parallel to formal structures.

Beyond these adaptive logics, recent scholarship has begun reframing Nollywood through a 'glocal' perspective—examining how local practices intersect with global circuits of production and consumption. Musa's (2019) *Nollywood in Glocal Perspective* argues that the industry's resilience is best understood through this hybrid frame: it simultaneously addresses domestic cultural preservation and responds to global audience demands. This dynamic was visible in the interview data, where practitioners emphasised both the desire to retain cultural authenticity and the strategic importance of global marketability. The digital transition and transnational collaborations discussed by interviewees illustrate how Nollywood's long-standing issues of

finance and regulation are increasingly negotiated within global opportunity spaces rather than purely national constraints.

At the same time, the tension between autonomy and institutionalisation remains central to academic and industry discourse. Adejunmobi (2022) argues that processes of professionalisation and market rationalisation in Nollywood introduce tensions that may limit the spontaneity and accessibility that characterise its grassroots origins. This ambivalence was evident among interviewees who simultaneously demanded stronger policy support yet feared bureaucratic interference. The analysis, therefore, positions Nollywood within a continuum rather than a rupture—its evolution shaped by ongoing negotiation between informality and formalisation, autonomy and dependency, national heritage and global aspiration.

Finally, *A Companion to African Cinema* (Harrow and Garritano, 2018) extends this debate by situating Nollywood within the broader context of African cinema scholarship, arguing that industries like Nigeria's must be understood not through Western paradigms of regulation or state funding, but as part of broader 'translocal economies of cultural circulation.' This framework highlights how Nollywood's structural challenges and adaptive strategies mirror global patterns of media production in postcolonial contexts, where creative industries operate through improvisation, partnership, and cultural entrepreneurship. The empirical evidence in this study supports this view, demonstrating that Nollywood's resilience lies not in the absence of constraints, but in its capacity to reinvent itself within those very constraints continually.

Thus, rather than reading the persistence of financial and regulatory problems as indicators of inefficiency, they should be interpreted as elements of an ongoing process of negotiation and adaptation. Nollywood's creative vitality emerges precisely from its ability to transform structural limitation into opportunity, thereby asserting cultural agency in both local and global domains.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented an analysis of data from interviews, questionnaires, and polls, supplemented by secondary literature, to provide a multidimensional understanding of Nollywood's role in preserving Nigerian heritage through storytelling. The findings, situated within broader socio-economic and cultural contexts, reveal that Nollywood operates at the intersection of tradition, creativity, and structural constraint. Three interlocking themes emerged—cultural preservation, structural constraint, and adaptive resilience—each shaping the industry's identity and evolution.

The analysis of language and symbolism in Nollywood films demonstrated how they encode Nigerian values and collective memory through proverbs, metaphors, and culturally embedded narratives. These elements, beyond entertainment, serve as instruments of education and moral consciousness, reaffirming the industry's role as a custodian of intangible heritage. The thematic coding of language further revealed how terms such as *money*, *heritage*, and *storyline* symbolically capture the tension between creativity and economic limitation, underscoring the inseparability of culture and material conditions in film production.

Interviews and questionnaires expanded this discussion, exposing the intricate dynamics between cultural ambition and material reality. Filmmakers and industry professionals identified persistent challenges—financial instability, inadequate governance, piracy, and limited technological access—while also emphasising resilience through innovation and informal collaboration. These findings illustrate what Larkin (2008) and Haynes (2016) term *infrastructural improvisation*: the creative adaptation of limited resources to sustain cultural production. Such practices represent a structured form of agency that has long defined Nollywood's evolution rather than mere reactive survival.

Poll results further reinforced Nollywood's cultural significance, with the majority of respondents recognising its moral and social influence. However, audiences also expressed expectations for enhanced storytelling quality, technical sophistication, and innovation—signalling a desire for balance between cultural authenticity and global competitiveness. This aligns with Musa's (2019) *glocal* framework, where local heritage and global aspiration coexist as defining forces in contemporary Nollywood.

Integrating these findings, Section 4.7, *Historical Continuities and Structural Constraints*, recontextualises the study within long-standing scholarly debates. As Haynes and Okome (2000), Krings and Okome (2013), and Harrow and Garritano (2018) demonstrate, Nollywood's financial and regulatory struggles are not new phenomena but enduring features of Nigeria's political economy. This continuity suggests that such challenges should not be viewed as stagnation, but as conditions that continually shape creative adaptation. The empirical data from this study confirm that Nollywood's resilience emerges *through* constraint rather than despite it.

Consequently, this thesis interprets Nollywood's structural struggles as ongoing negotiations rather than fixed deficiencies. Financial precarity, regulatory ambiguity, and inconsistent government support persist, yet they also catalyse innovation, collaboration, and digital transformation. The data reveal how filmmakers reimagine production and distribution through digital platforms, transnational partnerships, and entrepreneurial networks—reflecting Miller's (2016) argument that Nollywood's informal systems constitute sophisticated responses to systemic voids rather than evidence of disorganisation.

This recognition reframes Nollywood's narrative within a continuum of historical continuity and creative transformation. Its adaptive logic—its capacity to convert structural limitations into productive sites of creativity—illustrates its central role in redefining African

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modernity and reclaiming cultural agency in a postcolonial context. Resilience here is not static endurance but a dynamic process of negotiation between autonomy and institutionalisation, local heritage and global aspiration, tradition and innovation.

Ultimately, this chapter contributes to ongoing scholarly debates by affirming that Nollywood's significance lies not only in its cultural output but in the adaptive systems that sustain it. Its persistence within systemic constraints exemplifies a distinct African model of creativity—rooted in improvisation, collaboration, and flexibility rather than rigid institutional dependency. Recognising this dynamic invites a nuanced understanding of Nollywood's evolution: as a vibrant and self-renewing industry that preserves Nigeria's cultural identity while navigating the complexities of global modernity.

Chapter Five

5 The Bank of Industry: Financing Nollywood and Preserving Nigerian Heritage

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the Bank of Industry's (BOI) critical role in financing Nollywood and preserving Nigerian heritage. A key challenge identified through interviews, surveys, and polls is the chronic underfunding faced by Nollywood filmmakers. As the primary government institution designated to support the industry, BOI's financial contributions are vital to Nollywood's growth and cultural preservation. Without a dedicated focus on BOI's involvement, any discussion on Nollywood's financing would be incomplete, hence the significance of this chapter.

The financial constraints in Nollywood align with the Afrocentric framework, which stresses African-centered strategies for economic empowerment. Scholars such as Kwame Nkrumah (1964) argue that economic strategy must be rooted in African values, focusing on self-determination, autonomy, and the promotion of indigenous industries. Contemporary scholars like Chika Ezeanya-Esiobu (2017) and Nii Quaynor (2016) echo this, advocating for self-reliance and a rejection of dependence on external financial systems. This viewpoint is evident in Nollywood's recent struggles with platforms like Netflix, which ceased funding Nigerian films, citing economic mismanagement (Ibrahim, 2024). However, others argue that the issue is rooted in neo-economic colonialism. For instance, Nwosu (2024) suggests that BOI's increased support could reduce reliance on foreign investors and empower local filmmakers.

This chapter directly addresses how Nollywood advances Nigerian heritage, an unachievable objective without substantial financial backing from institutions such as the BOI.

BOI's role is central to Nollywood's growth, cultural preservation, and global competitiveness. Its financial interventions are essential to ensuring the industry's economic sustainability and cultural integrity. Additionally, this chapter explores how BOI's funding mechanisms align with Afrocentric economic principles, emphasising economic self-reliance and cultural sovereignty.

The challenges facing Nollywood's financing, along with the limitations of current interventions, highlight the need for reform within the financial ecosystem, which aligns with the principles suggested by scholars like Ezeanya-Esiobu (2017), who advocate for the reimagining of this system to serve local industries, prioritising African cultural values over external financial interests. Despite existing gaps, BOI's contributions continue to impact Nollywood's advancement and its potential to preserve Nigerian heritage. According to a recent industry report, 'BOI's funding initiatives hold promise for Nollywood's growth and the preservation of Nigerian heritage. However, economic imbalance and limited access to loans constrain their potential. These challenges hinder the industry's ability to produce films that authentically represent Nigeria's culture' (Nollywood Industry Technical Report, 2024).

5.2 BOI's Financial Interventions in Nollywood: NollyFund and CIFI

This section critically examines the BOI financial interventions in Nollywood, with a particular focus on NollyFund and the Creative Industry Financing Initiative (CIFI). It also assesses their alignment with Afrocentric economic principles of cultural preservation and self-reliance.

The BOI has played a pivotal role in Nollywood's financial ecosystem by introducing various funding schemes to address the sector's chronic financial challenges. These include NollyFund, CIFI, and other products aimed at providing essential resources to overcome economic constraints. These initiatives are underpinned by Afrocentric economic principles, which

emphasise cultural preservation and economic self-sufficiency as essential components of development. Dependency Theory (Dos Santos, 1970) further illuminates the importance of such financial initiatives, as it critiques external financial dependencies and advocates for self-reliance. In this context, the BOI's interventions challenge the dependence on foreign capital and seek to encourage internal financial structures that bolster the local creative economy.

NollyFund, launched in 2015, specifically targets Nollywood's longstanding underfunding issues. From an Afrocentric economic perspective, which prioritises African cultural values, NollyFund offers filmmakers the financial support necessary to elevate both the artistic and technical quality of their productions, particularly those that reflect Nigerian cultural narratives. This aligns with the Afrocentric view that reclaiming and nurturing Indigenous culture through the arts is vital to political and economic empowerment (Nwosu, 2004). The theoretical framework here draws on Cultural Economics (Throsby, 1994), which argues that cultural industries not only contribute to the economy but also serve as mechanisms for cultural expression and preservation. By facilitating the production of culturally relevant films, NollyFund contributes significantly to the preservation of Nigerian cultural heritage and enhances its position in the global cultural economy.

Similarly, the Creative Industry Financing Initiative (CIFI), introduced in 2018, seeks to reshape Nollywood's financial landscape. The initiative's core objectives align with Afrocentric principles of economic development, notably the promotion of localised industry growth and the reduction of reliance on foreign capital. Postcolonial Theory, as outlined in Said (1978), supports this objective supports by challenging the dominance of Western cultural products and advocating for the development of indigenous narratives. However, CIFI's implementation has faced several challenges, including bureaucratic inefficiencies and structural limitations, which have hindered

its potential impact. Despite these hurdles, the initiative remains promising and possesses the capacity to transform Nollywood's financial infrastructure. Nevertheless, as Nzinga (1997) cautions, interventions of this nature must be strategically designed to ensure long-term economic sovereignty and avoid over-reliance on state-controlled financial mechanisms that may be vulnerable to political and administrative instability. This concern aligns with Institutional Theory (North, 1990), which argues that the effectiveness of financial institutions depends on their ability to navigate the complex governance and policy environments.

5.3 Additional Financial Products and Their Challenges

Building upon the discussion of the BOI's primary financial interventions, NollyFund and the CIFI, this section critically examines additional funding mechanisms designed to support Nollywood. While these financial products aim to enhance the industry's economic viability, they are often hampered by systemic inefficiencies. These inefficiencies, defined as institutional or structural issues that undermine effectiveness (Okonkwo, 2023), are the primary focus of this analysis. They reflect broader systemic imbalances that disproportionately affect Indigenous industries and echo critiques of colonial legacies embedded within modern financial structures. The continued reliance on Western-centred financial models undermines African economic sovereignty and perpetuates dependency, despite attempts to localise funding structures. Institutional Theory, as discussed by (North, 1990) and World Systems Theory developed (Wallerstein, 1974) can be employed here to explore these inefficiencies and the need for reform.

The BOI Matching Funds scheme operates on a co-financing model in partnership with state governments, international organisations, and private investors, embodying the Afrocentric ethos of communal wealth creation and economic collectivism (Adegbite and Olayemi, 2022). This model facilitates shared financial responsibility, thereby mitigating risk for individual

stakeholders. Collective Action Theory, formulated by (Ostrom, 1990) resonates with this approach, explaining how collective financial efforts can yield more sustainable outcomes in communal settings. From an Afrocentric perspective, this cooperative model mirrors traditional African systems of resource sharing, where communities work together to sustain one another and ensure collective prosperity. In the context of Nollywood, the scheme offers a valuable opportunity to pool diverse sources of capital to develop high-budget, internationally competitive productions. However, systemic inefficiencies, such as protracted approval processes, where it may take months to get a project approved, and institutional bottlenecks, like bureaucratic hurdles that delay fund disbursement—undermine the urgency required in the fast-paced film industry. Timely financing is critical to production cycles (Eze, 2024). These inefficiencies reflect the Path Dependency Theory (Pierson, 2000), which underscores how historical governance patterns impede progress, especially in postcolonial contexts where bureaucratic inertia often reproduces colonial administrative systems.

The BOI's provision of loan guarantees seeks to de-risk lending by offering partial collateral coverage to financial institutions that extend credit to filmmakers. This initiative resonates with Afrocentric principles of mutual financial security and risk-sharing, akin to traditional rotating credit associations known as Esusu and Ajo, which were prevalent in pre-colonial African economies (Adesina, 2023). Social Capital Theory, building on the work (Bourdieu, 1986) supports this framework, highlighting the role of community-based financial networks in fostering mutual support and resilience. This approach aligns with Afrocentric values that emphasise collective responsibility and the preservation of communal wealth. However, the initiative's rigid qualification criteria—characterised by stringent creditworthiness assessments, high collateral demands, and burdensome documentation —result in the systematic exclusion of

many Nollywood filmmakers, particularly independent producers, and grassroots content creators. These guarantees paradoxically reinforce economic stratification by prioritising financial conservatism over inclusive access, contradicting the Afrocentric imperative of fostering self-sufficiency and redistribution of Indigenous wealth (Njoku, 2024). This exclusionary dynamic can be understood through Financial Exclusion Theory (Leyshon et al., 2004), which critiques how financial institutions often erect barriers that prevent marginalised groups from accessing capital.

The Export Expansion Facility (EEF) holds significant potential to enhance Nollywood's international market penetration by providing financial incentives for export-oriented productions. This initiative is pivotal in disseminating Nigerian cultural narratives globally, thereby reinforcing Nollywood's role as a key vector of soft power (Ogunleye, 2023). From an Afrocentric standpoint, the EEF can be viewed as a strategic tool to challenge the hegemony of Western cultural industries and promote the global dissemination of African narratives. However, high interest rates and limited awareness among industry stakeholders have led to minimal uptake of the scheme. These financial barriers epitomise neocolonial economic constraints perpetuating dependence on external capital structures. This aligns with Dos Santos's (1970) Dependency Theory, which critiques how global financial systems continue to subordinate peripheral economies. Ironically, an initiative designed to empower Nollywood's global expansion simultaneously entrenches financial subjugation by imposing cost structures that disproportionately favour well-capitalised entities over grassroots filmmakers (Balogun, 2024). This paradox reflects the inherent challenges in postcolonial economic structures, where attempts to challenge global dominance inadvertently reinforce it by relying on the systems that maintain power asymmetries.

The Women Entrepreneurship Fund (WEF) and the Bottom of the Pyramid (BOP) Fund are positioned as powerful instruments for fostering inclusivity within Nollywood by extending

financial support to female filmmakers and low-income creatives (Adeyemi and Musa, 2023). These initiatives align with gender equity paradigms and economic inclusivity, reflecting an Afrocentric commitment to empowering underrepresented groups. However, high interest rates and bureaucratic encumbrances deter eligible beneficiaries, thereby undermining their overall efficacy. While these schemes purport to democratise financial access, they simultaneously erect structural barriers that sustain existing power asymmetries, ultimately constraining the diversity of narratives that Nollywood can authentically project (Obi, 2024). This exclusionary tendency, as framed by Financial Exclusion Theory (Leyshon et al., 2004), critiques how financial institutions often erect barriers that prevent marginalised groups from accessing capital. Addressing these systemic issues is critical to ensuring the effectiveness of such funds in fostering inclusivity within Nollywood.

The Youth Entrepreneurship Support (YES) Programme and the Graduate Entrepreneurship Fund (GEF) exemplify BOI's strategic intent to nurture emerging creative talent through a tripartite model encompassing training, mentorship, and funding (Afolabi, 2023). These initiatives align with Afrocentric constructs of generational knowledge transfer and community-based entrepreneurial development. Becker's (1964) Human Capital Theory supports this framework by emphasising the long-term benefits of investing in individuals' skills and potential. From an Afrocentric perspective, such initiatives should aid in preserving and transmitting indigenous knowledge and creativity. However, restrictive selection criteria and limited funding allocations severely curtail their reach. The resultant exclusionary mechanism exacerbates the systemic inequalities these programs were intended to address, thereby negating their intended impact within Nollywood. As a result, the industry's capacity to cultivate a robust pipeline of indigenous storytellers remains stymied by the very financial instruments designed to facilitate such growth

(Ibrahim, 2024). This paradox can be framed using Structural Inequality Theory (Tilly, 1998), which explores how social structures systematically disadvantage certain groups despite intentions to foster equality.

While the BOI's financial products theoretically align with Afrocentric economic values, they are undermined by structural inefficiencies that limit their practical utility within Nollywood. Bureaucratic inertia, exclusionary financial gatekeeping, and interest rate disparities collectively constrain their transformative potential (Okpara, 2024). This dynamic highlight a persistent tension within postcolonial African financial systems, where financial mechanisms designed to empower indigenous industries may simultaneously sustain dependency on external structures. Said's (1978) Postcolonial Theory critiques such enduring structures of dominance, calling for a reassessment of the mechanisms that govern financial support. A financial architecture designed to empower Nollywood inadvertently sustains economic inequalities, reinforcing dependence on Western funding models. For Nollywood to attain genuine financial sovereignty, a decolonised funding framework is essential, one that prioritises accessibility, communal wealth redistribution, and Indigenous economic autonomy. Achieving this objective requires a recalibration of existing financial instruments to mitigate systemic barriers and enhance the industry's capacity for self-sustaining growth (Olatunde, 2023). Afrocentric Economic Theory, as articulated in Nwosu (2004) reinforces this imperative by advocating a development centered on African culture, values, and autonomy, thereby ensuring that the financial infrastructure aligns with broader goals for cultural and economic self-determination.

5.4 Structural Power, Financial Governance, and Nollywood's Economic Agency

While previous analyses have focused on discrete financial instruments, it is crucial to broaden our interrogation to include the structural governance underpinning BOI's financial

interventions. The core challenge Nollywood faces is not solely access to capital but its positionality within Nigeria's financial governance hierarchy —a hierarchy historically shaped by colonial and neoliberal legacies. This structural positioning inhibits the film industry's capacity to function as an autonomous economic actor within both national and global markets.

Afrocentric economic frameworks call for a fundamental rethinking of the power dynamics embedded in financial policymaking, particularly in how institutions like BOI set priorities, allocate resources, and define eligibility. Amílcar Cabral (1973) argued that the struggle against colonial domination must involve the reclamation of culture as a site of resistance. He viewed cultural liberation as integral to political and economic emancipation, warning that postcolonial nations risk remaining tethered to the logic of their former colonisers without restoring cultural identity. In the context of Nollywood, BOI's adherence to externally modelled financial frameworks—such as rigid credit assessments, technocratic administration, and Western-style investment metrics—can be viewed as perpetuating the invisible structures of cultural alienation that Cabral warned against. Thus, the economic marginalisation of local filmmakers cannot be disentangled from the broader erasure of African cultural values in policy design.

Similarly, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1986) critique of cultural imperialism provides a lens for understanding how globalised capitalist rationalities shape Nollywood's financial governance. Although nationally embedded, institutions like the BOI frequently emulate international development finance models that prioritise profit over cultural expression. This subordinates Nollywood's narrative agency to economistic demands, fostering a form of creative containment that limits Afrocentric storytelling within externally imposed financial parameters.

As articulated by scholars such as Dike Okoro (2009), the Afrocentric imperative for economic self-definition, referring to the capacity of African cultural industries to shape their own

economic systems and values, demands that such industries co-construct financial systems that reflect Indigenous values. Nollywood must be repositioned as a recipient of financial interventions and as a stakeholder in creating inclusive governance structures rooted in local epistemologies. This reimagining could include participatory financing, decentralised funding cooperatives, and the integration of creative guilds into policy-making processes.

Incorporating Ubuntu's economic ethics, which emphasise interconnectedness, reciprocity, and collective upliftment (Ramose, 2002; Mbiti, 1969), further challenges the individualistic assumptions underpinning current funding models. Ubuntu's economic ethics emphasise the importance of community and shared prosperity, which can significantly influence Nollywood's financial governance. By shifting from transactional to relational, financial logic, a more culturally consonant funding ecosystem can emerge—one that sustains the collective creative economy and fosters enduring hope and upliftment.

In sum, for Nollywood to transcend its financial precarity and assert its cultural-economic sovereignty, the architecture of financial governance must be decolonised. This transformation requires more than access to capital; it demands a profound reorientation of how value, agency, and risk are understood—a paradigm shift toward a model in which African cultural production is both the means and the end of development.

5.5 Conclusion

The Bank of Industry (BOI) plays a pivotal role in Nollywood's financial framework, offering funding mechanisms essential for industry growth and the preservation of Nigeria's cultural heritage. Programmes such as NollyFund and the CIFI embody Afrocentric economic principles by promoting self-reliance and cultural continuity. Yet, despite these initiatives,

Nollywood remains heavily reliant on external funding sources—particularly from global entities like Netflix—which poses risks to its long-term sustainability.

Netflix's involvement in productions such as *Lisabi* (2024) illustrates how market-driven imperatives can reshape indigenous storytelling. Recommendations to split the film into shorter segments to suit global viewing habits potentially disrupted its original narrative structure and pacing (Nollywood Reporter, 2024). Scholars argue that such interventions reflect a broader trend where commercial platforms influence not only distribution but also thematic and formal aspects of African cinema. Spearman (2025) describes this as a 'colonial power dynamic,' while Ugboh (2024) warns that Netflix's model, despite boosting Nollywood's global visibility, may marginalise local audiences and erode culturally rooted storytelling traditions.

The recent withdrawal of Netflix from funding Nigerian films, citing allegations of financial mismanagement, exposes the fragility of Nollywood's vulnerability and reliance on foreign investors. These external entities impose market-driven demands, often prioritising profit over cultural authenticity. As Nwosu (2024) argues, this dependency compromises the creative integrity of Nollywood, pushing it to conform to global standards at the expense of reflecting local cultural values. The importance of cultural authenticity cannot be overstated, as it is at risk due to Nollywood's current financial framework.

This situation highlights the urgent need for more robust and independent local financing structures. BOI's enhanced role could provide Nollywood with the stability and control needed to produce culturally authentic content that remains competitive internationally. According to Afrocentric economic theory (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2017), sustainable development for industries like Nollywood requires local financial systems prioritising cultural values and economic sovereignty over external influences. Strengthening BOI's financial support mechanisms would not only

reduce Nollywood's reliance on foreign platforms but also ensure that the industry remains financially stable and culturally autonomous.

Furthermore, as the analysis has demonstrated, the core challenge is the volume of capital available and the financial instruments' epistemological design and governance logic. Drawing on Cabral's (1973) assertion that cultural liberation is inextricable from economic emancipation, the imposition of externally modelled financial frameworks—even when administered locally—risks reproducing the very dependencies they seek to resolve. Similarly, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1986) critique of Eurocentric development models underscores the imperative for Nollywood's financial ecosystem to be grounded in African value systems and communal economic ethics. By 'communal economic ethics,' we refer to the principles and practices that guide economic activities within a community, emphasising collective wellbeing and sustainability.

In conclusion, Nollywood's future success hinges on the creation of a decolonised financial architecture that reduces reliance on external funding sources, embeds cultural agency into its financial governance and foregrounds Indigenous systems of value and economic participation. By 'cultural agency,' we mean the industry's capacity to make financial decisions that align with its cultural values and priorities. A reformed and empowered BOI, operating within an Afrocentric framework of cultural-economic sovereignty, can facilitate this transition. Only through such structural and epistemic realignment can Nollywood flourish as a globally competitive yet authentically African cultural force.

Chapter Six

6 Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

Grounded in Nigerian heritage and film, this study situates its analysis, to an extent, within a broader global context, highlighting the international impact of Nollywood. It examines how Nigerian heritage is presented and perceived globally through Nollywood storytelling, focusing on the interplay between local challenges and transnational narrative dissemination. The research employed a qualitative methodology, complemented by a hybrid approach incorporating quantitative methods, including the collection and analysis of numerical data from polls and questionnaires. These findings supported the qualitative analysis of Nollywood films, Nigerian oral literature, and heritage-related studies, many of which have circulated beyond Nigeria's borders. The investigation was guided by a theoretical framework centred on Afrocentricity, decolonisation, cultural appropriation, gender theories, and other perspectives with global relevance. In exploring these themes, the study traces Nollywood's increasing global engagement through digital streaming platforms (e.g., Netflix, Amazon Prime), international film festivals, and diasporic reception in Europe and the Americas. It further considers Nigeria's participation in international heritage frameworks, such as UNESCO's cultural conventions, and the influence of global cultural flows, as reflected in debates on Westernisation and cultural appropriation. The inclusion of the Bank of Industry's creative-industry financing initiatives underscores how Nollywood operates within transnational economic and creative systems. Together, these dimensions demonstrate that while the research remains rooted in Nigeria's cultural context, it reflects, to an extent, Nollywood's expanding global presence and its contribution to international conversations on identity, representation, and heritage preservation.

The study achieved its overarching aim and sub-aims, and addressed the specific objectives outlined in the introduction. In alignment with the primary objective, the research demonstrated that Nollywood storytelling serves as an effective medium for communicating Nigerian heritage to a global audience. Nollywood films contribute to preserving collective identity and adapting oral traditions while tackling societal issues. The study highlighted Nollywood's significant role in preserving and promoting intangible cultural heritage on an international scale. Key findings reveal that Nollywood films incorporate traditional narratives, proverbs, and Indigenous languages, thereby enriching the broader narrative of African cultural heritage. For example, films such as *Iyore* (2015) and *Sango* (1997) showcase the capacity of Nollywood to preserve cultural memory. These works serve both as a source of entertainment and as educational tools that impart cultural knowledge. They also serve as repositories of cultural practices essential for cultural continuity.

The research addressed Nollywood's contribution to advancing intangible cultural heritage and preserving cultural memory. It explored how the industry portrays elements such as oral traditions, Indigenous languages, and traditional practices, emphasising Nollywood's capacity to serve as a medium for cultural preservation. Cultural preservation refers to the deliberate effort to safeguard, maintain, and transmit a community's values, traditions, and expressions across generations, ensuring continuity amid evolving social and global conditions (UNESCO, 2003; Smith, 2006). It also encompasses the creative recontextualisation of heritage, allowing traditional forms to persist through adaptation and reinterpretation within modern media spaces (Tsika, 2024). Another vital aspect of the study was addressing the gap in understanding intangible heritage within the Nigerian context. Scholars such as Adejunmobi (2007) and Haynes (2016) have also examined Nigerian video films' transnational practices and cultural articulation, providing

important perspectives that this study extends within the Nigerian heritage framework. It emphasises the importance of integrating local knowledge systems into global cultural narratives to foster mutual respect and cross-cultural understanding. By promoting intangible heritage, Nollywood has the opportunity to ensure that lesser-known cultural practices are not overlooked.

Integrating cultural preservation with cinema's transnational dimensions reveals that Nollywood operates within a 'glocal' framework—producing culturally specific narratives that circulate globally while negotiating international aesthetics and technological practices (Salaudeen et al, 2025). This hybrid positioning underscores Nollywood's dual function as both a custodian and innovator of cultural expression, where preservation is inseparable from evolution. As Ogbe et al. (2023) observe, Nollywood's global visibility not only promotes Nigeria's socio-cultural identity but also reframes it through new representational lenses, enabling cultural self-definition within transnational exchange. Nollywood's capacity to embed folklore, proverbs, and communal rituals within modern storytelling formats exemplifies how the industry uses innovation to sustain cultural meaning. As Azuawusiefe (2024) notes, this reworking of orality and indigenous narrative techniques constitutes a living mode of heritage transmission suited to contemporary creative economies, with a significant global impact that the audience can take pride in.

Future research and industry collaborations should focus on exploring the nuanced representations of intangible heritage, ensuring that Nigerian cinema continues to reflect the complexities of its heritage while educating global audiences. The study also highlights how Nollywood narratives resonate with diverse audiences, influencing perceptions of Nigerian culture and contributing to cross-cultural dialogue. This involves examining how Nollywood films incorporate traditional elements, such as folklore, proverbs, and communal rituals, to create culturally rich and universally relatable stories.

The study provides evidence-based insights for scholars, policymakers, and media practitioners, reinforcing Nollywood's role in preserving cultural heritage, particularly in the face of globalisation and modernisation pressures. The research identifies several challenges facing Nollywood, including financial constraints, ethical concerns, and inadequate institutional support. It stresses the need for improved funding mechanisms and stronger institutional support. To overcome these barriers, the study proposes strategies such as enhancing governance, raising ethical standards, and leveraging digital platforms for broader distribution and increased global impact.

The study also examines Nollywood's role in transferring cultural memory, addressing societal issues, and preserving collective identity. Through an analysis of how films reflect and reinforce cultural values, historical narratives, and social norms, thereby contributing to a shared sense of identity and continuity within Nigerian communities. By evaluating selected films and industry practices, the study revealed that Nollywood is a significant vehicle for preserving and promoting Nigerian heritage. These findings offer valuable insights for scholars, policymakers, and media practitioners alike.

For policymakers, the study provides a foundation for developing targeted policies, funding, framework, and ethical guidelines that support Nollywood's heritage preservation efforts. Media practitioners can also draw on these insights to better understand Nollywood's role in addressing societal issues and fostering dialogue around critical topics such as gender equality and resilience. Interviews and surveys with industry stakeholders further revealed Nollywood's effectiveness in using film as a platform for public reflection and discourse, highlighting its impact on social change and cultural preservation.

This conclusion synthesises the study's main findings, showing that Nollywood operates as a medium for preserving and transmitting Nigerian heritage while shaping contemporary understandings of identity and cultural expression.

6.2 Cultural Significance of Nollywood Storytelling

The cultural significance of Nollywood storytelling was explored as a medium that actively archives and communicates Nigerian cultural knowledge. Nollywood films integrate traditional elements such as oral traditions, proverbs, and Indigenous languages, transmitting these cultural forms to new audiences and reinforcing cultural memory (Danbello and Dakogol, 2016; Dairo, 2021; Azuawusiefe, 2024; Tsika, 2024). Films like *Iyore* (2015) and *Sango* (1997) exemplify how storytelling preserves traditions while adapting them to contemporary cinematic contexts, demonstrating innovation in presenting heritage without losing its authenticity (Azuawusiefe, 2024; Tsika, 2024).

Nollywood storytelling also facilitates transnational cultural understanding, blending local narratives with techniques that make films relatable to both domestic and international audiences (Azuawusiefe, 2024; Tsika, 2024). This approach enables cinema to mediate cultural knowledge across borders, promoting dialogue and awareness of Nigerian heritage. By situating storytelling within cultural frameworks, Nollywood contributes to intercultural understanding, offering audiences insights into social norms, beliefs, and historical narratives (Danbello and Dakogol, 2016; Dairo, 2021).

The industry challenges Western-centric narratives by foregrounding Afrocentric perspectives, symbolism, language, and communal values. Through these cinematic strategies, Nollywood films present nuanced portrayals of African culture, fostering critical engagement with heritage and countering monolithic representations (Dairo, 2021; Azuawusiefe, 2024).

Nollywood's use of indigenous languages, cultural symbols, and traditional narratives demonstrates its role as an active agent of heritage transmission. Films encourage audiences to re-examine preconceived notions about African societies while providing a platform for cultural dialogue and knowledge exchange (Danbello and Dakogol, 2016; Tsika, 2024). By engaging with both local traditions and international audiences, Nollywood illustrates how cinema can mediate cultural knowledge and foster innovation in storytelling across cultural contexts (Danbello and Dakogol, 2016; Azuawusiefe, 2024; Tsika, 2024).

In addition, the study evaluated how Nollywood storytelling fosters a global understanding of Nigerian heritage by blending traditional cultural elements with contemporary storytelling techniques. This fusion allows Nollywood films to resonate with both local and international audiences, making them practical tools for cultural diplomacy. In this context, cultural diplomacy refers to the use of cultural products, such as films, to promote a better understanding of a country's culture and values. This alignment between local heritage and global appeal underscores Nollywood's potential as a powerful bridge between Nigeria's cultural past and its modern-day global narrative. Despite the challenges, as Afolabi, Onikoyi, and Okpadah (2022) observe, Nollywood's potential as a cultural diplomacy tool remains promising, offering hope for its future recognition and support within Nigeria's cultural policy.

The study highlighted Nollywood's role in dismantling cultural barriers and dismantling Western-centric narratives. Through symbolism, language, and Afrocentric ideologies, Nollywood offers a more inclusive and authentic portrayal of African heritage. By drawing on Afrocentric and decolonisation theories, the research illustrated how Nollywood is promoting a more inclusive and authentic representation of African heritage, moving beyond the limitations of colonial representations often perpetuated in Western media.

Nollywood's use of cultural symbols, indigenous languages, and traditional narratives goes beyond storytelling. It's a powerful tool for challenging global audiences to reconsider their preconceived notions about African culture. By offering alternative perspectives, Nollywood calls for a reassessment of the narrative frameworks typically imposed on African societies, countering mainstream media's portrayal that depicts Africa as monolithic and primitive. The study underscored the potential of Nollywood as a platform for cultural diplomacy, promoting cross-cultural understanding between Africa and the rest of the world. Its ability to challenge stereotypes and embrace African identity is significant and essential for a more equitable and inclusive global cultural exchange.

6.3 Evolution of Nollywood

The study critically examined the evolution of Nollywood and its role in addressing societal values and themes. Over the years, Nollywood films are no longer solely focused on entertainment; they now serve as powerful platforms for societal reflection and critique, tackling contemporary issues such as social justice, resilience, and post-colonial identity. Through its films, Nollywood educates its local audience about their heritage and promotes dialogue on critical social issues, keeping them informed and aware of the industry's societal impact. The research examined how Nollywood reflects the changing landscape of Nigerian society and how it continues to evolve by incorporating contemporary issues into its heritage-based storytelling.

Additionally, the study emphasised Nollywood's emergence as a major cultural export, significantly influencing global perceptions of African culture. Its growth has, to an extent, increased collaboration with international filmmakers, enriching its narratives and production quality. Nollywood's adaptability to technological advancements and its embrace of digital platforms have further expanded its global reach, making its stories more accessible to diverse

audiences. Ultimately, the research underscores the importance of Nollywood in fostering national pride and cultural identity among Nigerians while contributing to the global cultural landscape and shaping a positive perception of African culture worldwide.

This progression illustrates how Nollywood maintains its cultural foundations while evolving artistically, reinforcing its role as a living bridge between heritage and modernity.

6.4 Strategies for Enhancing Nollywood's Role

Building on the study's findings, several strategies were proposed to enhance Nollywood's role in heritage preservation and global cultural exchange. A key recommendation is the establishment of robust funding mechanisms to support the production of culturally significant films. This can be achieved through collaborations between the government, the private sector, and international organisations, creating a financial ecosystem that enables filmmakers to pursue heritage-based storytelling without the risk of monetary loss.

While adequate funding is crucial for the sustainability of heritage-focused films, financial support alone cannot guarantee that these films maintain cultural integrity or professional standards. Therefore, the study also emphasised the adoption of ethical guidelines as a complementary strategy, with the potential to significantly impact the industry.

In this context, ethical guidelines refer to a coherent framework of moral, cultural, and professional principles that shape conduct and decision-making across all levels of film production and distribution. These principles promote respect, orderliness, and decency in both creative expression and industry operations, ensuring that filmmakers preserve cultural authenticity, avoid vulgar or exploitative portrayals, and represent Nigeria's traditions with integrity and sensitivity (BusinessDay NG, 2024; Independent Newspaper Nigeria, 2024; UNESCO, 2021). By providing

both moral direction and professional discipline, such guidelines foster a balance between creative freedom and social responsibility.

Recent discourse in the Nigerian film sector reinforces this need. Industry leaders and guild representatives have called for stronger adherence to ethical standards and professional codes to safeguard the credibility and cultural role of Nollywood. To ensure accountability, regulatory bodies will continue to urge producers and distributors to uphold societal decency and moral standards in film content, with penalties for non-compliance. Together, these perspectives position ethical filmmaking not only as a moral obligation but as a strategic imperative for sustaining heritage-based storytelling in a competitive global market.

There must therefore be an industry-wide commitment to ethical filmmaking that balances global competitiveness with the preservation of Nigeria's cultural heritage. Collaborations with cultural experts, historians, and local communities will further ensure that films accurately reflect Nigerian heritage in both content and context, avoiding misrepresentation while deepening cultural appreciation worldwide. This collective action is crucial in maintaining cultural authenticity.

A systemic challenge identified was notably the lack of institutional support, particularly ineffective funding mechanisms. These challenges have impeded the industry's ability to fully utilise its cultural influence and contribute to the global discourse on African heritage. As identified in Chapter five, insufficient financial support from institutions such as the Bank of Industry (BOI), which has yet to adapt its funding model to the specific needs of the film industry, poses a significant barrier. To tackle this, the study proposed the overhaul of financial institutions to offer targeted, strategic support for heritage-based filmmakers. This reform could involve the establishment of dedicated funds for cultural films that promote Nigerian traditions, languages, and historical narratives. Such support would equip filmmakers with the resources necessary to

produce high-quality films and ensure that cultural films receive the funding needed to compete successfully in both local and international markets.

Moreover, the research highlighted the importance of policy changes that would facilitate the development of the Nollywood sector as a fully recognised cultural institution. The lack of a comprehensive regulatory framework and adequate institutional support has left filmmakers navigating a complex and often fragmented industry. To address this, the study advocates for stronger governmental and private-sector collaboration to provide filmmakers with consistent funding and policy support, while also ensuring that such policies do not undermine creative autonomy and artistic freedom. This includes establishing industry-specific grants, tax incentives for production, and a more robust distribution infrastructure that empowers filmmakers to innovate freely. With a more structured and supportive financial and regulatory environment, Nollywood can strengthen its regional presence and expand its global influence without compromising the independence of storytelling.

The research also acknowledges Nollywood's role in fostering cultural resilience and innovation. Despite its challenges, the industry has shown a remarkable ability to adapt and evolve. By aligning storytelling with heritage preservation and acting as a platform for social commentary, Nollywood continues to serve as a powerful medium for narrating Nigerian stories and shaping global perceptions of African identity. Its unique blend of creativity and tradition serves as a crucial asset in preserving cultural continuity, particularly amid the pressures of globalisation and Western cultural dominance. The ability of Nollywood filmmakers to create compelling narratives that reflect the complexities of Nigerian society has solidified Nollywood's place as a cultural institution and a significant global player in the entertainment industry.

This study underscores Nollywood's significant role in cultural resilience and innovation. By addressing systemic challenges, reforming financial institutions, and acting as a platform for social commentary, Nollywood remains central to preserving and promoting Nigerian culture on the global stage. It also plays a key role in shaping global perceptions of African identity, fostering cross-cultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

The findings contribute to the academic discourse on heritage preservation, social change, and cultural diplomacy by offering practical insights into the challenges and solutions facing Nollywood. The research provides valuable recommendations for policymakers, filmmakers, and other stakeholders invested in Nollywood's future. The study also sets the stage for future research to examine how Nollywood continues to evolve in response to global trends and changing audience expectations. By deepening our understanding of Nollywood's local and global level, this research paves the way for more strategic engagement with Nollywood as a dynamic cultural force, ensuring its continued role in driving positive cultural and social change.

6.5 Limitations of the Study

This research, which delved into the preservation, exploration, and conveyance of Nigerian heritage through Nollywood storytelling and oral traditions, is necessary to address crucial gaps in the existing body of knowledge. However, several limitations emerged during the study, which must be acknowledged to contextualise the findings and guide future research. Conceptual and methodological constraints impacting the findings' scope, depth, and generalisability are outlined below. Given that this study is a professional doctorate, the limitations reflect academic and industry-specific realities, acknowledging real-world challenges in Nollywood and Nigerian cultural heritage.

Similarly, the films analysed were primarily drawn from Yoruba, Edo, and Igbo cinematic traditions, with limited representation from Hausa-language films and other regional cinemas. Although efforts were made to ensure broader ethnocultural and geographical coverage, many productions from the Hausa-speaking region and smaller linguistic groups are produced in indigenous languages. While this is good for originality and heritage preservation, subtitling often fails to capture the cultural nuance. Moreover, the scarcity of high-quality English-language productions and limited distribution posed challenges to inclusive representation.

While the internet provides some access to Nigerian films, it is not a substitute for a structured national film repository. Unlike institutions such as the British Film Institute, which archives films that are not readily available online, Nigeria lacks a comprehensive archival infrastructure. As a result, many early and culturally significant Nollywood films have been lost or remain inaccessible, impeding efforts to trace the evolution of heritage narratives. Future research should advocate for the development of digital repositories and improved archiving strategies. Governmental and institutional support is essential to preserve key cultural narratives and ensure they remain available for scholarly and industry use.

This exclusion may result in an incomplete understanding of Nollywood's role in cultural preservation, potentially overlooking unique storytelling techniques and heritage-preservation strategies found in Hausa-language films and other minority ethnic productions. A more balanced selection could have enriched the analysis if the desired films had been in circulation. Even at that, given the vast ethnic diversity of Nigeria, it would have been beyond the scope of this study to review every cinematic contribution. Many communities may have produced only one or two films, yet these still form part of Nigeria's collective heritage and deserve attention in future work.

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The study relies primarily on qualitative methods, such as interviews and thematic analysis, which offer depth but limit the generalisability of findings across the entire Nollywood industry. Additionally, despite its rigour, the manual coding process may introduce subjectivity—a significant limitation even with efforts to maintain analytical integrity. Nonetheless, this method supports a depth of engagement with the data that can be difficult to replicate through automated approaches. A qualitative approach was hybridised with quantitative methods, and incorporating a more comprehensive mixed-methods design could have provided a more balanced perspective. However, the research focused on a specific scope where the chosen methodology was most effective for addressing the key objectives. The study deliberately focuses on films produced within a specific timeframe to capture a pivotal stage in Nollywood's development. While this focus inevitably excludes some earlier and more recent works, it enables a concentrated analysis of a transformative period in the industry's storytelling and cultural preservation practices. Future research could build on this foundation by exploring trends across a broader temporal scope.

Additionally, the study relies, to some extent, on the researchers' interpretations, which may introduce cultural bias, particularly when analysing films from different ethnic backgrounds. Nollywood storytelling is deeply rooted in diverse cultural traditions, and meanings vary significantly. For instance, traditional attire, ritual practices, or proverbs may hold specific symbolic significance within a particular ethnic group that does not translate easily to outsiders. While efforts were made to ensure rigour, the possibility of unintentional bias remains a conceptual limitation. Language differences also pose challenges. As mentioned earlier, Nigerian films frequently employ code-mixing and code-switching—such as blending English with Igbo or Pidgin—which may not translate seamlessly. This can lead to a loss of nuance in interpreting dialogue, symbolism, and cultural references, thereby affecting the depth of analysis. Scholars,

students, film studies, and cultural analysis professionals must remain mindful of this challenge, as acknowledging and addressing them is a shared responsibility within the field.

A key limitation of this study is the exclusion of specific subsectors within Nollywood, notably Yorubawood, Kannywood, and Igbowood. These factions contribute meaningfully to the cinematic representation of Nigeria's diverse cultural and ethnic narratives. However, their omission was necessitated by the study's scope and the prevailing challenges of ethnocentric tensions, such as tribalism, in the country. This limitation presents an opportunity for future research to adopt a more inclusive approach, offering a more comprehensive understanding of Nollywood's role in preserving and conveying Nigerian heritage, enriching both academic and industry discourses.

Another significant limitation, perhaps not peculiar to this research alone but significant, is the difficulty of securing interviews with key Nollywood practitioners. While efforts were made to engage prominent actors, screenwriters, directors, and other stakeholders, many could not participate due to scheduling constraints. Although several expressed interest, many of these professionals ultimately apologised for their inability to contribute, citing filming commitments that extended up to ten months in advance. While most interviewees required scheduled interviews, future research may address this issue by adopting more flexible and extended interview schedules along asynchronous methods such as recorded responses or written submissions. This approach could offer a wider array of voices and experiences, thereby enhancing the richness of heritage narratives explored.

The significant financial constraints shaped the methodological choice in this study. The inability to conduct fieldwork due to limited funding led to the exclusive use of online interviews, digital surveys, and secondary data analysis. While these remote methodologies did provide

valuable insights, they also presented challenges that may have affected the depth of engagement with Nollywood stakeholders and heritage practitioners.

Conducting fieldwork in Nigeria, especially for a study requiring extensive interaction with filmmakers, cultural custodians, and heritage site managers, is a financially demanding endeavour. The costs associated with travel, accommodation, and logistics for site visits posed a significant challenge. Heritage sites such as the Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, the Sukur Cultural Landscape, and various ancient oral tradition shrines are dispersed across various regions, often requiring substantial financial investment to access. Similarly, Nollywood film hubs located in cities like Lagos, Enugu, and Asaba demand considerable resources for meaningful, in-person engagement. The costs of flights, road transportation, lodging, and other expenses also meant that visiting multiple locations was not feasible within the available budget.

Furthermore, financial limitations prevented the use of specific qualitative research tools, such as participant observation and focus group discussions, which were excluded from the research plans from the outset. Witnessing the actual process of filmmaking and heritage site, activities would have provided firsthand insights into the challenges and strategies employed in preserving Nigerian heritage through Nollywood. Similarly, conducting focus group discussions with multiple stakeholders, such as actors, directors, heritage site managers, and local community members, would have facilitated a richer exchange of perspectives. However, coordinating such discussions remotely proved logistically challenging, particularly for participants in remote areas of the country with inconsistent internet access.

Security concerns in Nigeria posed a significant challenge to fieldwork, particularly when visiting heritage sites and Nollywood film locations. Nigeria's increasing security challenges, including terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, and civil unrest, made on-site research difficult,

particularly in northern and central Nigeria, where several significant heritage sites related to oral literature are located. For instance, the Sukur Cultural Landscape, a UNESCO World Heritage site in Adamawa State, is situated in a region that has experienced frequent attacks by insurgent groups. The presence of Boko Haram and other armed factions in northeastern Nigeria has made travel to this area highly risky. As a result, it was impossible to visit the site, engage with local custodians, or document how its heritage is preserved and represented in Nollywood films.

Security concerns persist even in the southern regions, where Nollywood is most active. Cities like Lagos and Asaba, which serve as central hubs for Nollywood productions, have witnessed an increase in criminal activities, including armed robberies and kidnappings. Nollywood filmmakers themselves have been directly affected, with several industry figures experiencing attacks or abductions. Notable examples include the kidnapping of actors such as Pete Edochie and Nkem Owoh, which underscores the risks associated with on-location filming. As a result, many filmmakers have adopted a more controlled shooting environment, such as an enclosed studio, rather than filming at historical sites or traditional rural settings. Due to these risks, conducting direct observational studies at Nollywood film sets was not feasible, particularly for those in more remote or insecure areas. Being present at these locations would have provided valuable insights into how filmmakers navigate security concerns while incorporating heritage narratives into their films. For instance, understanding the logistics behind filming historical reenactments in potentially unsafe areas would have offered a deeper perspective on how Nollywood balances authenticity with safety considerations. However, the inability to visit these locations meant that this aspect of the research had to rely on secondary sources and testimonies from industry stakeholders.

The security situation also hindered engagement with local communities involved in heritage preservation. Many traditional custodians, particularly those in rural areas, have been affected by ongoing security threats, making direct communication difficult. Some cultural film practitioners have been displaced due to communal conflicts, further complicating efforts to document their contributions to Nollywood's representation of heritage. As a result, the research was limited in its ability to capture grassroots perspectives on heritage preservation. Moreover, security risks in certain areas made it challenging to analyse some heritage-themed Nollywood films within the context of their original filming location. Productions such as *Aníkúlápó* (2022) and *Oloibiri* (2015), which explore themes of Nigerian history and cultural identity, were shot in locations that may now be considered unsafe for researchers to visit. Without the opportunity for firsthand observation, the study had to rely on post-production narratives and interviews with filmmakers, which, while informative, may not have captured the full depth of on-location dynamics. The dynamic nature of Nollywood presents another challenge. Known for its rapid production cycle, the industry continuously releases new films that often reflect evolving sociocultural realities. Scholars such as Adejunmobi (2019) have described Nollywood as a 'moving target', a metaphor that captures the sector's resistance to fixed analytical categories and its continual reinvention across production, distribution, and thematic concerns. As a result, the findings of this study represent only a specific moment within an ever-changing landscape. The fast-paced nature of the industry means that trends, themes, and audience reception of heritage narratives can shift quickly, making it challenging to capture a static or definitive representation of Nollywood's role in heritage preservation. This conceptual framing reinforces the need to approach Nollywood as a fluid and adaptive cultural form, rather than a stable object of study. This limitation highlights the need for longitudinal research approaches to track shifts in heritage

representation over time. Future studies could incorporate real-time data collection techniques, periodic follow-ups, and digital archiving strategies to ensure continued relevance, fostering an understanding of how heritage representations change and adapt to shifting cultural dynamics within Nollywood.

The lack of formal regulation in Nollywood hampered this research. In this context, formal regulation refers to the establishment of clear, industry-wide standards or professional guidelines—developed through recognised film bodies or cultural agencies—that define acceptable practices for heritage representation. This differs from government interference, which implies direct state control or censorship over creative content. Without such structured, non-political regulation, there is no standardised approach to depicting heritage, making it difficult to identify consistent patterns or evaluate how Nigerian heritage is portrayed across films. Consequently, the study could not rely on clear, universally accepted criteria to assess how well Nollywood films preserve or convey cultural narratives. The need for a formal regulatory framework—one that supports quality assurance and cultural integrity without restricting creative freedom—is thus underscored, along with its potential impact on the industry.

The absence of formal regulation, such as the unimplemented 'Motion Picture (Professions) Regulation Bill (MOPICON)', has contributed to a fragmented industry in which filmmakers often prioritise commercial success over cultural depth or heritage representation. Acknowledging the scepticism among practitioners concerned about possible government interference, the thesis nonetheless recognises the position of industry members who believe that a professionalised framework could enhance the representation of Nigerian heritage.

However, prior analyses by Haynes (2016) and Krings and Okome (2013) have explored aspects of Nollywood's institutional and transnational policy contexts, indicating that while some

groundwork exists, further empirical examination remains necessary to understand evolving regulatory mechanisms and their implications for heritage representation.

The thesis does not insist on full enforcement of the MOPICON bill. Instead, it explores the potential value of an industry-led regulatory framework that is supported—but not controlled—by government. This approach, in a developing country context such as Nigeria, could bring about significant benefits. For example, the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) receives substantial state backing yet maintains a high degree of autonomy in policy and operations, a reassuring sign for the preservation of independence. According to iTelemedia (2025) 'In 2024, the federal government allocated ₦2.5 billion to the NFF (£1.27 million), representing 60% of its total budget, while partnerships with brands like MTN and Aiteo Group contributed another 30%.' This illustrates that government support can strengthen an industry while preserving independence, providing a parallel for Nollywood.

Concerns about the feasibility of a 'standardised' or 'universal' approach to heritage representation are valid. This thesis, therefore, does not claim that cultural authenticity can be objectively measured. Instead, it argues for the development of more straightforward ethical guidelines— designed collaboratively by the industry—to encourage accountability and cultural respect. To safeguard against political bias or manipulation, it recommends that any regulatory body be transparently funded through independent sources (for example, a national lottery fund) to ensure support without exerting creative control.

A useful comparative case is the Hong Kong Film Development Council via the Film Development Fund (FDF) in Hong Kong, which follows an industry-led funding model: government injects funds but leaves key decisions—such as project selection and production direction—to the trade (CSTB, 2022; CCIDA, 2023). This demonstrates that state-linked support

does not need to stifle creative freedom if structured appropriately. Similarly, the UK National Lottery provides funding for the British Film Institute (BFI) to support film production, education, and audience development. The BFI's approach ensures that funds are allocated to projects based on merit and strategic objectives while preserving the creative autonomy of filmmakers (BFI, 2023; BFI, 2025). This model supports the argument that transparent, independent funding mechanisms can sustain Nollywood without compromising its creative independence.

The lack of such a structured, yet independent oversight mechanism in Nollywood has resulted in uneven heritage representation. Films driven primarily by market forces may compromise cultural depth for commercial appeal. This inconsistency limited the study's ability to examine how cultural narratives are transmitted and preserved. Furthermore, weak intellectual property regimes have made it difficult to trace cultural materials used in production, further complicating the research environment.

In summary, while acknowledging the complexity of concepts such as 'authenticity' and 'quality'—and the impossibility of universal criteria—this thesis argues for a middle ground: neither laissez-faire nor rigid state control, but a balanced, transparent regulatory framework that supports professional and cultural integrity in the Nigerian film industry. The tension between commercialisation and cultural authenticity is a significant concern in this study. The drive for profitability in Nollywood has not just shaped the scope of the research but has also, at times, compromised cultural authenticity. Heritage-focused films, tailored to mass audiences, sometimes presented oversimplified or altered cultural portrayals. This compromise is particularly disappointing given the richness and diversity of Nigerian heritage. The study could not fully engage with nuanced and authentic representations of Nigerian heritage, as commercial pressures

distorted cultural authenticity in many examined films. This is a concern that needs to be addressed in the industry.

The underrepresentation of women and marginalised voices in Nollywood further limited our research. Gendered and minority perspectives on heritage are often overlooked in mainstream productions, restricting our ability to capture a diverse and inclusive portrayal of Nigerian heritage. To address this, the study made a concerted effort to include a significant number of women among the research participants and focused some of its analysis on films that explored gender-related themes in depth. This was not just merely an effort but a necessary step to foster a more inclusive representation. The exclusion of these perspectives in the industry led to a more homogenous narrative that primarily reflect patriarchal viewpoints and the heritage of dominant ethnic groups. As a result, important aspects of Nigerian heritage, particularly those from women and marginalised communities, were inadequately represented, further narrowing the scope of the research. These limitations— especially piracy and copyright violations, commercialisation pressures, and the underrepresentation of women and marginalised voices—directly impacted the study's depth and inclusivity. They created barriers to accessing a diverse range of films and, to an extent, skewed the analysis towards commercially driven narratives and excluded critical cultural perspectives. Together, these challenges constrained the study's ability to comprehensively understand Nollywood's role in preserving and conveying Nigerian heritage.

Technological constraints also posed notable challenges during data collection. Although digital platforms enabled access to industry perceptions and audience reception, infrastructural deficiencies in Nigeria, particularly unreliable internet services, led to disruptions in virtual interviews. Poor network conditions resulted in delayed conversations, repetition of questions, and interruptions at critical moments, affecting the spontaneity and depth of dialogue. These

disruptions may have impacted the overall quality of data collected. Furthermore, limited access to high-quality film production equipment likely restricted certain filmmakers' ability to create authentic representations of heritage stories. Future studies would benefit from improved technological solutions, such as stable communication platforms, pre-recorded interview responses, and broader government-driven improvements in internet infrastructure to ensure seamless interaction with participants. Such advancements would enhance the research experience and enable more reliable data collection processes and higher-quality outcomes.

By recognising these limitations, this study ensures transparency in its scholarly contributions and highlights key areas for future research. While acknowledging scepticism regarding the unimplemented 'Motion Picture (Professions) Regulation Bill (MOPICON)', the thesis considers the potential benefits of a balanced, industry-led framework supported—but not controlled—by government. Evidence from the Nigeria Football Federation's state-backed yet autonomous operations (iTelemedia (2025), the Hong Kong Film Development Fund (CSTB, 2022; CCIDA, 2023), and the UK National Lottery model (BFI, 2023; BFI, 2025) demonstrates that state support can strengthen creative industries without undermining independence.

The research reiterates its focus on responsible heritage representation, emphasising that 'authenticity' and 'quality' are subjective and culturally situated. Instead of pursuing unattainable universal standards, the study advocates for collaborative ethical guidelines and transparent, independent support mechanisms. These are crucial in encouraging responsible heritage representation and ensuring that the cultural heritage of Nigeria is accurately and respectfully portrayed.

This study calls on industry stakeholders, policymakers, and scholars to develop structures that balance support with autonomy, ensuring Nollywood remains a viable medium for cultural

preservation and national identity formation. Strengthening research methodologies, expanding data collection, and integrating interdisciplinary approaches will be essential for advancing future scholarship on Nollywood's contribution to Nigerian heritage within the practical realities of a developing-country context.

6.6 Recommendations

Building on the insights discussed, the following strategic recommendations aim to bolster Nollywood's role in preserving Nigerian heritage while addressing critical challenges within the industry. These recommendations integrate economic, technological, and policy-driven considerations into a cohesive framework for sustainable development. To enhance its global competitiveness and cultural relevance, Nollywood must prioritise academic research and professional inquiry. This multi-dimensional approach is essential for the industry's long-term success as it evolves and seeks to elevate its contributions to Nigerian culture and the global film industry. Achieving these initiatives requires collaboration among key stakeholders, including government agencies, private investors, and academic institutions. Establishing partnerships with international film industries can give Nollywood the necessary resources and exposure to elevate its global presence. Implementing robust training programs for emerging filmmakers is vital to ensure a continuous influx of fresh talent and innovative ideas. Embracing sustainable practices in film production, which will also contribute to the industry's long-term viability, should be a priority. By addressing these key areas, Nollywood can continue to flourish and significantly impact Nigerian heritage and the global film landscape.

6.6.1 Reform of the Bank of Industry (BOI)

One of the most pressing challenges facing Nollywood is the inadequate and disjointed financial support available to filmmakers. While the BOI has played a significant role in providing financial assistance to the industry, its current offerings often fall short of addressing Nollywood's specific needs. Urgent reform of the financing mechanisms is necessary to better cater the unique demands of filmmakers. A crucial first step could be the establishment of a dedicated fund for heritage-based films, which often face higher production costs due to their unique narrative focus and the need for cultural authenticity. Such a fund would provide much-needed financial stability and enable them to pursue culturally significant and economically viable projects. Moreover, offering low-interest loans and targeted financial literacy programs would empower filmmakers to manage their resources better and sustain their production efforts. Studies are required to look into the practical difficulties filmmakers face in securing funding, including bureaucratic hurdles within the BOI and the impact of these constraints on the quality and quantity of heritage-based films. These findings should inform the development of financial products suited explicitly to Nollywood's operational realities.

Additionally, understanding the correlation between financial accessibility and film production is essential. As previously noted, limited funding often compels filmmakers to make compromises in areas such as script development, set design, and casting. These factors can influence production values, but notions of 'film quality' are inherently subjective and culturally relative. Nollywood has developed a distinctive approach to filmmaking, characterised by community-oriented, participatory, and collective viewing experiences rather than strict adherence to conventional Western standards of cinematic quality. This study, by highlighting the importance of considering who defines quality and in what context, sheds light on the subjectivity of film

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quality. At the same time, addressing financial constraints can enhance production values, allowing Nollywood to compete globally while preserving its unique storytelling traditions.

6.6.2 Economic Impact Assessment

Nollywood significantly contributes to Nigeria's economy, yet its full economic impact remains underappreciated in policy and business circles. A comprehensive economic analysis is crucial to justify increased investment and policy support. Research should quantify Nollywood's contributions to job creation, tourism, and international trade. For example, Nollywood films attract international audiences and, in doing so, boost sectors such as hospitality and retail, primarily through tourism linked to film locations and cultural tourism.

Economic modelling techniques can be employed to measure Nollywood's influence on other industries. For instance, studies should explore how Nollywood's success has positively impacted sectors like fashion, where Nigerian films have popularised traditional attire and promoted local designers on a global scale. The potential for Nollywood to drive the growth of technology, particularly in digital platforms, could also be explored. These sectors directly and indirectly affect Nigeria's broader economy, and understanding these relationships will help stakeholders appreciate Nollywood's full economic value. Comparative studies with global film industries, such as Bollywood and Hollywood, can offer valuable insights into strategies for leveraging cultural products to stimulate economic growth. Nollywood can adopt similar strategies to position itself as a cultural and economic development driver. Such research will support strategic planning, thereby ensuring its continued sustainability and fostering a sense of optimism about the industry's potential for economic growth.

6.6.3 Technological Integration and Global Competitiveness

The rise of digital streaming platforms has reshaped how films are distributed and consumed, and this presents Nollywood with both new opportunities and challenges. Research should examine the impact of digital streaming platforms on Nollywood's content production, audience engagement, and revenue generation. The relationship between digital platforms and Nollywood's ability to reach international audiences is crucial for the industry's growth. Platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, and local services such as IrokoTV have given Nollywood a global presence, allowing filmmakers to reach viewers far beyond Nigeria's borders. However, the advent of digital streaming also raises questions about how algorithms, audience analytics, and monetisation strategies can affect the visibility of Nollywood films. Research should explore how these platforms use data to recommend content and how these algorithms favour certain types of films over others. Understanding how to optimise content for digital platforms, from creating engaging thumbnails to using data analytics to fine-tune the types of films produced. Additionally, democratising access to Nollywood films via digital platforms poses significant questions for preserving and disseminating Nigerian culture. Digital streaming makes Nollywood's cultural narratives accessible worldwide, enhancing Nigeria's soft power and global influence. However, it also necessitates new strategies for managing intellectual property rights and protecting creative works in the digital space. Research on how Nollywood can navigate these issues and safeguard its content while embracing digital platforms is critical.

Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and blockchain offer new opportunities for innovation in Nollywood. AI can enhance pre-production, from scriptwriting assistance to casting recommendations, while VR has the potential to offer immersive storytelling experiences. Blockchain offers a secure, transparent way to manage

copyright and intellectual property. Research into the feasibility of integrating these technologies into Nollywood's filmmaking processes will help the industry remain competitive globally. Such technological advancements could also make Nollywood films more engaging, attracting international audiences who seek novel viewing experiences. This emphasis on technological integration will help stakeholders understand the importance of staying abreast of technological advancements in the industry's future.

6.6.4 Socio-Cultural Influence and Policy Support

Nollywood has a profound socio-cultural impact, shaping societal perceptions on issues such as gender equality, elitism, and social justice. Research should investigate how Nollywood films address these issues and contribute to social transformation. For example, the portrayal of women in leadership roles can challenge traditional gender norms and promote more egalitarian views. Academic studies using content analysis methodologies to evaluate how Nollywood films tackle issues like gender inequality, youth disenchantment, and political corruption, providing insights into their broader social impact. Understanding audience dynamics is also crucial for Nollywood's long-term success. Research on audience reception using quantitative and qualitative research methods, such as surveys and focus groups, filmmakers can obtain a clearer picture of viewer preferences, including factors such as ethnicity, age, gender, and socioeconomic status. Additionally, audience analysis can help filmmakers understand the social impact of their films, ensuring that they not only entertain but also contribute to positive societal change. Policy support is fundamental for Nollywood's continued growth and sustainability. A critical review of existing government policies, funding programs, and regulatory frameworks is necessary to identify gaps and areas for reform. Government interventions, such as tax incentives, grants, and infrastructure development, can support Nollywood filmmakers. Encouraging public-private partnerships is also

vital, as it offers greater access to technology, funding, and training. Strengthening intellectual property protections is also crucial to ensure Nollywood filmmakers are fairly compensated, fostering an environment where innovation can thrive.

The strategic recommendations outlined above provide a clear roadmap for enhancing Nollywood's role in cultural preservation and industry advancement. Reforming financial systems, quantifying Nollywood's economic impact, embracing technological advancements, and reinforcing policy support are key to ensuring Nollywood's continued success. By integrating economic, technological, and policy-driven strategies, Nollywood can preserve Nigeria's cultural heritage while positioning itself as a global force in the entertainment industry. With focused research and actionable interventions, Nollywood can expand its influence on the global stage, cementing its place as a vital player in preserving Nigerian culture and a significant contributor to the global film industry.

Building on these socio-cultural and policy dimensions, Nollywood's influence also extends to the promotion of civic consciousness and democratic participation. Another vital area for future research is Nollywood's potential to foster active citizenship. As Pontianus and Oruonye (2022) argue, film has long served as a medium for promoting social responsibility and civic awareness, while Endong (2024) highlights cinema's ability to reflect cultural and political dynamics and empower citizens to hold their leaders accountable. Nollywood can adopt a similar approach by showcasing stories of grassroots activism and citizen-led efforts to challenge corrupt practices and demand better governance. Research could explore how such narratives inspire political activism and whether they contribute to a culture of civic engagement, particularly among Nigerian youth, who are already highly active in organising protests and using social media to demand justice

(Iyorza, 2017). Additionally, future studies could examine Nollywood's potential to influence political behaviour in Nigeria. Ezeh, Chukwuma and Enwereuzo (2021) observe that film portrayals of godfatherism and electoral culture influence voter behaviour and public awareness, making understanding Nollywood's influence on public opinion and behaviour critical to assessing its role as a catalyst for change. Moreover, Aondover and Msughter (2023) postulate that when cinema reflects moral integrity and good governance, it can foster long-term shifts in citizens' expectations of leadership and inspire new democratic values. In sum, Nollywood has a unique opportunity to contribute to Nigeria's democratic future by re-imagining leadership and governance. However, to fully understand this potential, future researchers must explore how Nollywood shapes public perceptions, inspires political activism, and promotes the value of good governance.

Further fields for future research include the following:

6.6.5 Nollywood and Education

Future studies could explore another multifaceted role of Nollywood films in education and public awareness. It could critically analyse how Nollywood is an educational tool, addressing various topics beyond culture and heritage, including politics and contemporary social justice issues. Research could critically analyse how these films contribute to public discourse and foster awareness, potentially reshaping the Nigerian culture and educational landscape.

Such studies would offer valuable insights into Nollywood's interlinked roles in cultural preservation, social transformation, and global cultural exchange. By integrating educational content into its storytelling, Nollywood fosters a deeper understanding of critical issues and promotes broader societal development.

In summary, Nollywood's educational potential lies not only in its thematic diversity but also in its capacity to democratise knowledge and stimulate intellectual engagement. Its narratives—rooted in indigenous epistemologies and everyday realities—offer culturally grounded insights into history, ethics, and contemporary life. As Zafar and Iqbal (2023, p.3) argue in their study of *Àyìnlá* (2021), a masterpiece by filmmaker Tunde Kelani, Nollywood reaffirms indigenous identity through language, narrative structure, and visual aesthetics, positioning cultural storytelling as pedagogical and describing it as a "vehicle for cultural education." This resonates with its function in knowledge dissemination, often bridging gaps left by formal education systems. Onuzulike (2007, pp. 231-242) highlights how Nollywood transmits distinctly Nigerian accents, styles of dress, and behavioural idiosyncrasies, reinforcing cultural identity. More significantly, it shapes public consciousness through informal modes of learning, enlightening audiences about its societal impact. By embedding complex social issues within accessible storytelling, Nollywood cultivates ethical inquiry and social reflection in ways that are affective, dialogic, and transformative. This pedagogical function aligns with Coffield's (2000.p.8) argument that informal learning should be recognised as 'fundamental, necessary and valuable in its own right.' More importantly, it positions Nollywood as a dynamic site of knowledge production—one that not only shapes consciousness but also promotes lifelong learning, thereby enriching Nigeria's educational ecosystem in a lasting manner.

6.6.6 Gender Dynamics

The portrayal of gender roles in Nollywood offers an essential space for research, particularly concerning gender equality and women's empowerment. Gender dynamics in Nollywood have evolved significantly over the years, and understanding how they are portrayed in contemporary films is crucial for gaining insight into the changing social landscape of Nigeria

and the broader African continent. Nollywood films often reflect societal attitudes towards gender roles, providing a rich area for exploring the shifts in these roles and the tensions that persist. Research could examine how women are depicted in various genres of Nollywood films, from romantic comedies and dramas to historical and action films, and investigate how these portrayals challenge or reinforce traditional gender norms, highlighting the urgency and relevance of this research in the current academic landscape.

In recent years, Nollywood has increasingly portrayed strong, independent female characters who challenge societal expectations and advocate for gender equality and women's empowerment. Films like *The Wedding Party* (2016) and *Fifty* (2015) portray women in various walks of life – as professionals, entrepreneurs, and empowered individuals – thus contributing to conversations around women's roles in modern Nigerian society. However, despite this progress, many Nollywood films continue to feature stereotypical depictions of women with limited agency, often relegating them to secondary roles or portraying them as dependent on male protagonists. Such portrayals are prevalent in Nollywood's early offerings, where women were usually depicted in traditional roles as wives, mothers, and homemakers.

Existing research, including Azuawusiefe (2021) and Onyenankeya (2019), has examined these persistent gender stereotypes and their implications for women's representation in Nollywood. Their studies highlight both the progress made and the enduring limitations in the industry's portrayal of female agency. However, further inquiry is needed to understand how contemporary filmmakers are reimagining women's roles and challenging patriarchal norms through storytelling and production choices.

At a broader cultural level, gender representation in Nollywood can also be understood through the lens of oral traditions and indigenous storytelling, which provide enduring frameworks for interpreting women's roles and identities. The intersection of traditional Nigerian orature, oral literature, and gender representation presents a vital area of research. Oral traditions, such as folktales, proverbs, and myths, have historically reflected societal attitudes toward gender, often presenting distinct roles to men and women. Women are usually depicted as subservient to men or as symbols of fertility and beauty. However, in some oral narratives, women are portrayed as influential figures, like the legendary Queen Amina of Zazzau, who led armies and ruled as a warrior queen. This duality in traditional narratives offers a framework for understanding the contemporary portrayals of women in Nollywood. Research could investigate how these traditional stories are adapted in modern Nollywood films, particularly regarding gender dynamics.

Moreover, this research could delve into how Nollywood filmmakers incorporate both contemporary and traditional narratives to depict the struggles women face in Nigerian society, including issues such as domestic violence, workplace discrimination, and societal expectations. Scholars can better understand Nollywood's potential role in subverting patriarchal structures by critically analysing these depictions. This can also serve as an opportunity to explore the influence of Nigerian oral literature in shaping contemporary Nollywood narratives, offering new perspectives on gender equality and women's empowerment in the industry and inspiring a sense of hope and optimism for the future.

Analysing the portrayal of gender roles and dynamics in Nollywood films. This research could focus on how Nollywood addresses gender equality issues and women's empowerment. Additionally, it could explore how Nigerian orature contributes to these discussions, enriching the

discourse on gender-related issues within the Nigerian and African context. By examining traditional narratives and their contemporary adaptations, this study can highlight how oral literature and Nollywood films intersect to promote gender equality and challenge societal norms.

6.6.7 Nollywood and African Diaspora Studies

Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry, has experienced rapid growth, extending its influence far beyond Nigeria. It has established a significant presence within African diaspora communities across the United States, the Caribbean, the United Kingdom, Canada, and South Africa. These communities engage with Nollywood films as a source of entertainment and cultural continuity, identity formation, and connection to their heritage. Despite Nollywood's increasing global influence, its relationship with diaspora audiences remains relatively underexplored, making it an essential area for future academic inquiry.

Existing scholarship, including Jedlowski (2013,) and Krings and Okome (2013), has examined Nollywood's diasporic audiences and circulation patterns. While their work provides a valuable foundation, further targeted studies are needed to understand how film narratives shape heritage, identity, and belonging among African diaspora communities.

Nollywood acts as a cultural bridge, reinforcing diasporic ties to the homeland through familiar narratives, traditions, and languages. Films such as *The Wedding Party* (2016) and *Lionheart* (2018) evoke nostalgia, particularly among second and third-generation Africans seeking to maintain a sense of cultural identity despite being geographically removed from their ancestral roots. Investigating how diaspora audiences interpret these films can offer critical insights into hybrid identities, transnational belonging, and cultural adaptation. As Akudinobi (2015, pp.133-140) argues in 'Nollywood: Prisms and Paradigms', the industry itself operates

through multiple interpretive lenses, functioning both as a prism that refracts Nigerian identity in diaspora contexts and as a paradigm for understanding African cultural modernity.

Additionally, Nollywood serves as a medium through which the challenges of migration, assimilation, and cultural dissonance are articulated. Themes such as generational conflict, Western influence, and the preservation of African traditions resonate with diasporic audiences navigating life between multiple cultural spheres. Moreover, Nollywood provides an alternative to reductive Western portrayals of Africa, presenting a more layered and empowering depiction of the continent. This counter-narrative is vital in fostering a balanced and self-determined African identity within the diaspora, instilling a sense of pride and empowerment; hence, an impact that warrants further studies.

Diaspora-based filmmakers play a crucial role in Nollywood's global expansion, blending international cinematic techniques with African storytelling traditions. Their work not only enhances Nollywood's aesthetic and technical quality but also broadens its reach to both African and non-African audiences, solidifying shaka the industry's position as a significant force in global cinema. The transnational collaborations emerging from this engagement warrant further scholarly attention, particularly in relation to representation, market dynamics, and the politics of African storytelling within a globalised media landscape.

Future research on the relationship between Nollywood and African Diaspora Studies holds substantial academic potential. Key areas of exploration include audience reception, migration narratives, transnational film production, and Nollywood's role in shaping diasporic identities. Investigating these aspects will provide valuable insights into the industry's evolving impact. As

Nollywood's global influence continues to grow, its importance to diaspora communities will remain pivotal to shaping the future of African cinema and its reception on the world stage.

6.6.8 Nollywood and Environmental Studies

The potential role of film in shaping environmental awareness and action is realisable, but it requires our scholarly attention. As one of Africa's most influential and prolific film industries (Krings and Okome 2013; Larkin 2008), Nollywood occupies a unique position to shape public perception and understanding of environmental issues in Nigeria and beyond. Given Nigeria's escalating environmental challenges—deforestation, pollution, oil spills, rapid urbanisation and climate change—Nollywood's capacity for social engagement warrants close critical attention. Nevertheless, as DeLuca (1999) and Hansen and Machin (2013) observe, the relationship between film, media and political or social change cannot be taken for granted. However, it must be interrogated through scholarly analysis of form, circulation and reception. While the role of mass media in raising environmental awareness is well established, Nollywood's specific contribution remains underexplored in the academic literature on environmental advocacy and education. Nichols (2016) and Bleiker (2018) further remind us that visual media rarely operate through direct persuasion; instead, they shape public consciousness by cultivating affective identification and framing the moral and emotional dimensions of collective issues. This suggests that Nollywood's environmental storytelling should be situated within a wider understanding of media effects and cultural influence. Therefore, scholars must examine how Nollywood can foster environmental consciousness, sustainability and government accountability in addressing ecological crises.

The industry's massive reach and cultural influence provide a compelling rationale for academic inquiry into its role in environmental studies. With films consumed widely across Nigeria and the African continent—through cinemas, television broadcasts and increasingly digital

platforms—Nollywood can reach millions of viewers. Research shows that environmental films can increase audience awareness and shift perceptions, even when they may not immediately change behaviour (Fernández-Bellon and Kane, 2019). Through aesthetic, emotional and narrative strategies, cinematic texts can shape how audiences perceive and value ecological relationships, often in subtle ways that transcend overt didacticism. Through compelling narratives, vibrant characters and engaging visuals, Nollywood can engage viewers with pressing environmental issues such as pollution, deforestation, water scarcity and the environmental consequences of industrialisation. Though these themes may not always take centre stage in its productions, their portrayal can nonetheless recalibrate public attitudes—particularly when films foreground the human toll of ecological damage.

Films like *The Figurine* (2009) and *Sango* (1997) stand out for their unique approach to environmental themes. They incorporate elements of nature and traditional beliefs, while also highlighting the consequences of human actions on the environment. *The Figurine*, for instance, weaves environmental preservation through its narrative and visual imagery, using folklore and symbolism to promote respect for nature. This distinct approach provides a rich ground for scholars to explore how Nollywood filmmakers use symbolic elements, character arcs, and conflict resolution to integrate themes of environmental sustainability into broader storylines. The intersection of entertainment and activism in these films offers a unique opportunity to analyse how Nollywood can balance storytelling with promoting environmental education. Furthermore, studying how Nollywood portrays the impacts of environmental damage can offer insights into how media shapes public understanding and behaviour regarding environmental responsibility.

However, as Roy (2015) and Boykoff et al. (2019) remind us, the relationship between film, media, and social or political change cannot be presumed. Media texts do not automatically generate transformation but instead operate within networks of reception, interpretation, and social context. How films stimulate emotional, cognitive, and discursive engagement with environmental issues depend on audience experience and the broader socio-institutional conditions in which they circulate (Boykoff et al., 2019). Therefore, when considering the potential of Nollywood to effect environmental awareness, it is necessary to foreground these mediating factors rather than assume direct causality. This understanding will make the audience feel informed and aware of the complexities involved.

Furthermore, Nollywood's potential to inspire societal change lies in its ability to challenge existing norms and raise awareness about sustainable practices (Adediran and Ademiju-Bepo, 2024). Scholarship on environmental film demonstrates that cinema does not merely inform audiences but engages them through discourse, affect, and representation. For instance, Mizan-Rahman (2024) shows that animated environmental films mobilise discourse and emotional engagement around ecological themes, while Duvall (2017) argues that environmental documentaries function as nodes within broader activist networks, encouraging reflection and potential behavioural change rather than guaranteeing it. Ecocritical film scholarship also emphasises that film participates in environmental culture by shaping how viewers perceive human–nature relations (Diller, 2023).

While most of this research originates in the Global North, its selective application within the lens of Afrocentricity is relevant to understanding how Nigerian cinema, particularly Nollywood, engages with environmental consciousness. Projects such as *Film as a Catalyst of*

Social Transformation (Filmuniversität Babelsberg, 2024) highlight how fictional cinema contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals by influencing public discourse and social dispositions. Similarly, recent scholarship in Diller (2023) stresses that the significance of environmental film lies not only in content but in how it positions humans within ecological systems. Within the unique Nigerian context, Nollywood's representations of nature and tradition can be examined for their capacity to enable reflection and engagement with environmental ethics rather than simply for their didactic messages.

Therefore, it is crucial for scholars to actively investigate the effectiveness of Nollywood in portraying environmental solutions and to evaluate the potential impact of such depictions on viewers' attitudes. Nollywood's influence could foster a new culture of environmental responsibility, particularly among younger generations who are increasingly engaged with visual media (Mizan-Rahman, 2024; Duvall, 2017). By adapting global ecocritical frameworks to African cinematic contexts, researchers can more rigorously assess how film participates in, and possibly catalyses, social and ecological change.

In addition to promoting environmental awareness, Nollywood plays a critical role in holding governments accountable for environmental mismanagement. Many African governments, including Nigeria's, are criticised for ineffective environmental policies and poor implementation. Nollywood can expose governmental and corporate negligence by depicting the damaging effects of environmental degradation — including pollution, oil spills, and the depletion of natural resources — through the integration of these narratives into popular films. In doing so, Nollywood functions as a form of soft activism. Imiti and Anyanwu (2025) provide evidence that Nigerian films addressing the Niger Delta, such as *Blood and Oil* (2015) and *The Liquid Black*

Gold (2009), highlight environmental degradation while critiquing corporate-state collusion. Agba (2011) supports the view that Nollywood narratives shape audience perceptions of ecological and social justice, suggesting the potential for media to foster civic awareness. Building on these insights — and acknowledging that empirical research on Nollywood's environmental role remains limited — scholars can assess its broader potential in environmental communication, civic engagement, and ecological responsibility (Imiti and Anyanwu, 2025; Agba, 2011; Vaughan, 2025). Together, these studies indicate that Nollywood serves as a platform for social commentary and public engagement on ecological issues, linking media representation to potential civic action.

Analysing Nollywood's portrayal of government inaction offers valuable insights into the media's role as a watchdog, encouraging citizens to demand transparency and stronger environmental policies. Vaughan (2025) argues that environmental media — across formats and production cultures — can shape public discourse and policy by embedding ecological concerns within culturally resonant narratives. This conceptual framing provides a useful lens for understanding how Nollywood's storytelling may influence audience perceptions of climate risks and sustainability. Scholars can assess how Nollywood films complement these communication strategies and influence policy discourse, particularly in shaping public attitudes toward ecological crises. Given the urgency of global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and deforestation, Nollywood's potential to drive behavioural change should not be underestimated. Studies on audience engagement in Nigeria indicate that media narratives can affect attitudes and behaviours regarding environmental responsibility, with Ndu (2025) and Inobemhe, Santas and Ogbesoh (2024) providing empirical support for this connection. Although these studies do not focus on Nollywood's environmental themes specifically, they affirm the media's role in shaping civic attitudes and responsible behaviour. These findings collectively suggest that Nollywood

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functions not only as entertainment but also as a vehicle for raising ecological awareness and inspiring responsible environmental behaviour among audiences.

Thus, Nollywood's ability to engage large audiences in discussions about environmental sustainability represents a significant opportunity for social change. Scholars can assess Nollywood's capacity to inspire behavioural change, promote policy reforms, and contribute to a more sustainable future (Imiti and Anyanwu, 2025; Agba, 2011; Vaughan, 2025). Future research can build on these findings to critically examine how Nollywood's eco-narratives contribute to environmental policy discourse and civic mobilisation. While Ndu (2025) and Inobemhe, Santas and Ogbesoh (2024) focus respectively on audience engagement and media-driven development frameworks, their insights underscore the communicative power of Nigerian media in shaping public attitudes and fostering participatory awareness. Positioned within this evolving scholarly landscape, Nollywood emerges as a culturally embedded tool for environmental advocacy — one capable of influencing both public perception and policy deliberation.

In sum, Nollywood holds considerable promise as a platform for advancing environmental education, raising awareness about sustainability, and holding governments accountable for environmental mismanagement. Its reach, cultural influence, and storytelling capabilities offer a unique opportunity to explore how the film can advocate for environmental change. By investigating Nollywood's role in public attitudes, scholars can deepen their understanding of the power of media in addressing critical ecological issues. In doing so, they will uncover the potential of Nollywood to help build a more environmentally conscious and proactive society, both in Nigeria and beyond.

6.6.9 Nollywood and the Revival of Traditional Religions

The intersection of Nollywood and African traditional religions is a crucial but insufficiently examined area of scholarship. As Nigeria undergoes rapid urbanisation, religious diversification, and the increasing dominance of Christianity and Islam, its Indigenous spiritual systems have been systematically marginalised. While this thesis has addressed Nollywood's role in reviving these traditions, further inquiry is needed. Scholars must consider Nollywood not only as a mirror of cultural shifts but as a cinematic force actively shaping discourse around Indigenous spirituality. Its engagement with traditional religions is more than thematic—it constitutes a site of ideological contestation, cultural resistance, and identity reformation warranting deeper academic attention.

Scholarly work on African spirituality has long been dominated by anthropological and historical perspectives, which often portray traditional religions as static or archaic. Uwah (2011) critiques how Nigerian popular films depict these practices through reductive moral binaries, reinforcing colonial-era stereotypes. Endong (2022) offers a semiotic analysis of Nollywood's religious symbolism, showing how spiritual artefacts—such as the Bible or charms—are framed as objects of mystical power, evoking both reverence and fear. Azuawusiefe (2020) explores Nollywood's engagement with prosperity theology, gendered spirituality, and supernatural motifs, positioning the industry as a site of religious negotiation and cultural production. Collectively, these studies reveal that Nollywood's portrayals oscillate between affirmation and distortion.

Films like *The Figurine* (2009) frame Indigenous spirituality as a source of mystical power, while *The Gods Are Not to Blame* (2003) presents it as a system of ethical reasoning and social order. Although scholars such as Uwah, Endong, and Azuawusiefe have examined symbolic

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framing and religious syncretism, there remains limited analysis of how these portrayals are received by audiences or shaped through cinematic technique. The gap lies not in thematic neglect but in the absence of systematic studies on narrative structure, visual symbolism, and audience interpretation. Such research is essential to understanding how Nollywood mediates the tension between reverence and scepticism toward traditional belief systems.

Contrary to historical accounts that depict traditional religions as rigid or declining, Nollywood offers a dynamic portrayal of their evolution. Many films explore how traditional spiritual systems negotiate modernity through hybrid religious practices, conflicts with urban lifestyles, or their interaction with globalisation. Yet, the theoretical frameworks for understanding these negotiations are still emerging, and the existing ones are more extensive. Are Nollywood films reinforcing that traditional religions must adapt to survive, or are they asserting their continued relevance in their unaltered forms? Future research must assess how Nollywood constructs a discourse on the fluidity of religious identity in contemporary African society.

The political dimension of Nollywood's engagement with traditional religions remains underexplored. Given Nigeria's history of religious marginalisation and the dominance of Abrahamic faiths in governance, Nollywood's depictions of Indigenous spirituality may serve as a subtle form of cultural resistance. By amplifying narratives that reclaim traditional religious identities, these films could foster a counter-hegemonic discourse. Nollywood's role in the revival of traditional religions is far more than an artistic choice; it is a cultural phenomenon that shapes public consciousness, influences identity formation, and negotiates the boundaries between tradition and modernity. While this thesis has initiated a discussion, the scope for further research is vast. Scholars must move beyond descriptive analysis to critically interrogate how Nollywood

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is reshaping the perception of Indigenous spirituality in contemporary Nigeria. Whether the industry serves as a preserver, distorter, or reinvigorate of traditional religions remains a pressing question that future research must urgently address.

6.6.10 Nollywood's Future in Global Film Festival

Nollywood, widely recognised as one of the most prolific film industries worldwide, has demonstrated significant progress in film production and audience engagement. However, its representation at major global film festivals remains disproportionately low compared to Hollywood, Bollywood, and other established industries. Despite enjoying significant domestic and diaspora viewership, their presence at prestigious festivals such as Cannes, Berlin, Toronto, and Sundance is limited. Given film festivals' crucial role in shaping global cinema, scholarly inquiry into Nollywood's under-representation in these spaces is both necessary and timely. Film festivals serve as key gatekeepers in the global film industry, influencing which films gain international recognition, critical acclaim, and wider distribution. They also serve as platforms for cultural diplomacy, fostering cross-cultural dialogue and enabling films to transcend national boundaries. Research into Nollywood's participation in these festivals can provide insights into the selection mechanisms and structural barriers Nigerian filmmakers face.

Endong (2023) notes that film festivals function as mechanisms of cultural legitimisation, granting symbolic and professional capital to filmmakers and industries. He highlights that Nollywood's limited visibility in these spaces reflects structural hierarchies within global cinema rather than a lack of artistic merit. Similarly, Endong and Essoh (2013) discuss how media production in general, and the Nigerian film and music industries in particular, can enhance Nigeria's cultural globalisation by engaging international audiences through events such as

carnivals and festivals. These perspectives provide useful context for understanding Nollywood's positioning in global film festivals.

Scholars can explore how festival curation practices impact Nollywood's visibility and assess whether aesthetic, thematic, or institutional biases contribute to its marginalisation. One critical area of inquiry is the selection criteria employed by significant film festivals. Many prestigious festivals tend to prioritise films with specific narrative styles, themes, and production aesthetics, often favouring experimental, politically engaged, or art-house cinema. Nollywood, traditionally known for commercial storytelling, melodramas, and romantic comedies, may not align with these dominant festival trends. Research could investigate how these curatorial preferences shape Nollywood's global positioning and whether the industry's evolving film aesthetics are beginning to align more with festival expectations. Another significant research avenue is the role of medium-scale festivals, such as the Nollywood Film Festival Germany (NFFG) in Frankfurt (See Appendix A Figure 17), which provide alternative platforms for Nollywood films. Scholars can examine how participation in such festivals influences Nollywood's international reception trajectory and whether they serve as strategic entry points into more prestigious festivals. Additionally, understanding how Nigerian filmmakers leverage these festival networks could shed light on strategies for increasing Nollywood's global presence. The impact of festival participation on a film's distribution and critical reception also warrants attention. Films featured at international festivals secure wider theatrical releases, streaming deals, and industry credibility. Nollywood's limited festival representation may hinder its access to these opportunities. Research could analyse how festival recognition affects a film's marketability, audience reach, and reception among international critics. Moreover, investigating the extent to which festival screenings translate into financial and career benefits for Nigerian filmmakers

would offer valuable insights into the economic significance of festival participation. Furthermore, while digital distribution and streaming platforms have transformed Nollywood's global reach, film festivals remain vital for validation and industry networking. Scholars could explore the interplay between digital platforms and traditional festivals in Nollywood's international strategy, assessing whether streaming services offer an alternative to festival recognition. Researching Nollywood's representation in global film festivals is critical to understanding its international trajectory. Investigating selection criteria, the impact of participation, and strategies for increasing its presence can provide valuable insights for scholars and industry stakeholders. By shifting focus from production to festival engagement, researchers can better understand how Nollywood strengthens its global position and earns greater recognition.

In this evolving journey, Nollywood not only tells stories but also preserves cultural memory. Its archival and aspirational films flicker across screens, shaping the world's view of African identity and heritage, one frame at a time.

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APPENDIX

Figure 17: Shows the author Tunji Offeyi responding to questions at the Nollywood Film Festival, Papille Kino, Goethe University Germany 2024 (Obidi Henry, July 12, 2024. Personal collection).
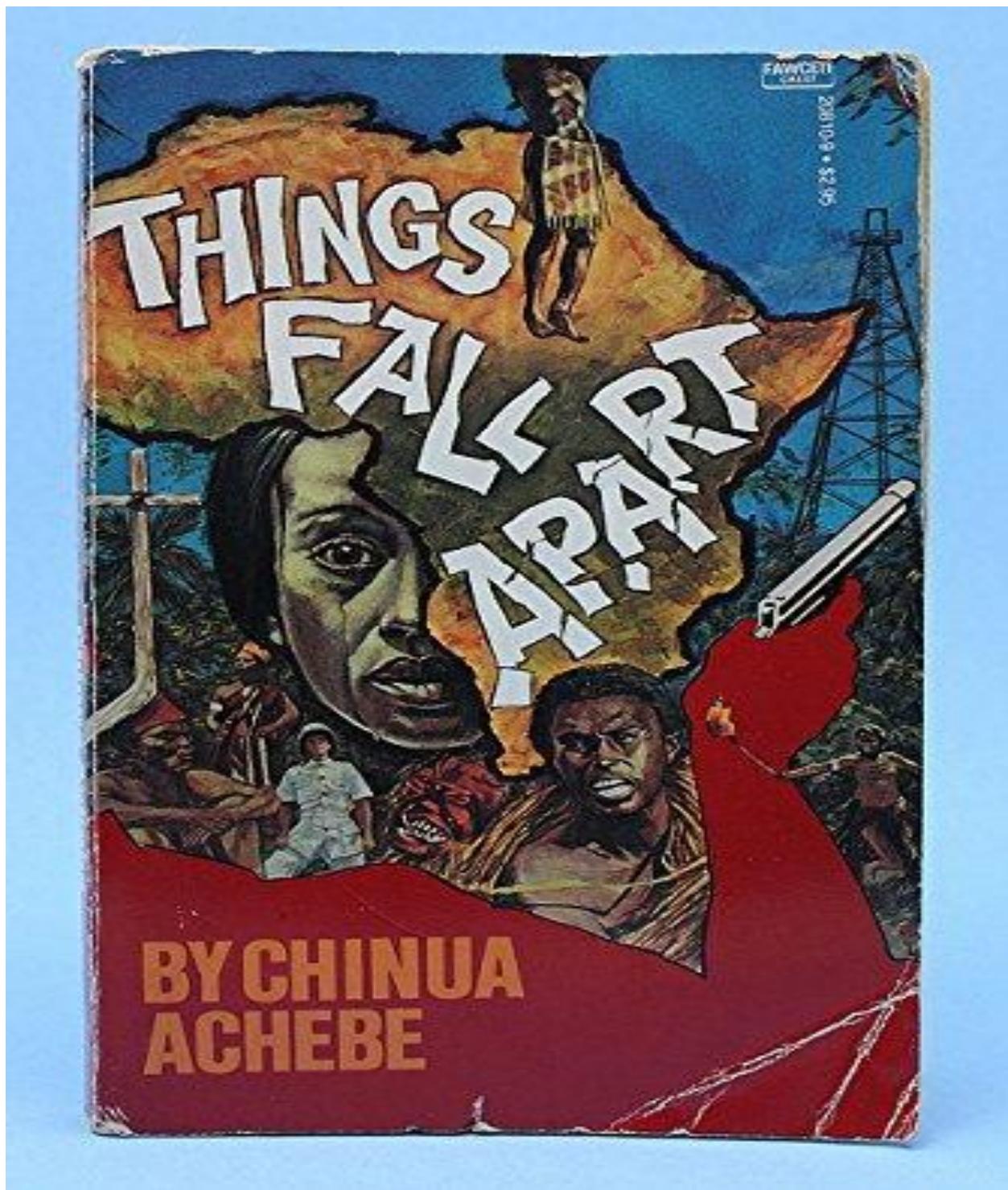
Figure 18: shows the cover page of the iconic novel *Things Fall Apart* first adapted to a Nollywood film in 1987 (AbeBooks, 2024).

Letter of Introduction and Informed Consent Form

Study Title: Nollywood: challenges, heritage practice and storytelling

Researcher: Olatunji Offeyi

Before agreeing to participate in this research, please read the following explanation of this study in detail. This statement describes the purpose and procedures of the study. Also described is your right to withdraw from the study at any time until thesis submission. The Research Ethics Board of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David has approved this study.

Explanation of Procedures

This study is designed to examine how Nollywood impacts the Culture and Heritage of Nigeria and Africa at large. The research question is.
'To what extent has Nollywood storytelling contributed to Nigerian Heritage?'
This study is being conducted to learn more about this question since it has not been studied much. Participation in the study involves interviewing you to ask fundamental questions about your understanding and viewpoints of the Nollywood industry related to Nigerian Heritage. The specific timing of the interview will be agreed upon, and a virtual interview on the University Teams platform will last approximately one to two hours. This researcher will conduct the interviews, which will be recorded and later transcribed for the purpose of data analysis.

Risks and Discomforts
No risks or discomforts are anticipated from your participation in the study. Any potential risk of discomfort or emotional distress is unlikely when asked questions during the interview. However, should the interviewee feel uncomfortable at any time, it shall be paused or postponed.

Benefits

The anticipated benefit of participation is the opportunity to discuss your perceptions and concerns about your experience of the Nollywood industry, thereby contributing to its growth and development when practitioners, the government, the general public and researchers further understand its challenges and hidden nuances.

Confidentiality

The information gathered during this study will remain confidential on secure premises of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David Cloud-based storage system, such as University email, transcript from Teams recordings uploaded to the researcher's university One Cloud account. Only the researchers will have access to the study data and information. There will not be any identifying names on the surveys or interview transcripts; they will be coded and kept confidential. Your names and any other identifying details will never be revealed unless you expressly wish to be identified in any publication of the results of this study. The recordings will be deleted after the study. The research results will be published as a professional doctorate thesis and may, in part, be published in a professional journal or presented at professional meetings. It may also be published in book form. The knowledge obtained from this study will be of great value in guiding professionals, Nollywood fans and cultural enthusiasts on the importance of Nollywood storytelling about Nigerian Heritage discourse.

Withdrawal

Without prejudice, participation in this study is voluntary; refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You are free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation in this project at any time without prejudice or penalty. You are also free to refuse to answer any question or any likely further questions and follow-up. You are welcome to ask the researcher any questions that occur to you during the interview. If you have further questions once the interview is completed, you are encouraged to contact the researcher using the contact information given below. You are welcome to contact the UWTSD Doctoral College Research Ethics Board. If you have other questions or concerns about the study, contact them via email at pgrathrofa@uwtsd.ac.uk.

I, _____, have read the above information. I freely agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to refuse to answer any question and to withdraw from the study at any time. I understand that my responses will be kept anonymous.

....
Participant Signature   **Date**
If:
(a) you would like to waive anonymity
(b) you would like a copy of your interview transcript once it is available
(c) you are interested in information about the study results as a whole and/or
(d) if you would be willing to be contacted again in the future for a possible follow-up interview, please provide contact information below:

Check those that apply:
_____I would like to waive anonymity
_____ I would like a copy of my interview transcript
_____ I would like information about the study results.
_____ I would be willing to be contacted in the future for a possible follow-up interview
Write your address below. Please also provide an additional email address if you have one.
Researcher email address: 2214724@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

Figure 19: shows the Letter of Introduction and Informed Consent Form for the study titled *Nollywood: challenges, heritage practice and storytelling* (Author's work, 2024).

Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

RESEARCH STUDENTS This form is to be completed by the student within **SIX** months for full-time students and **TWELVE** months for part time students, after the commencement of the research degree or following progression to Part Two of your course. Once complete, submit this form via the **_MyTSD Doctoral College Portal_** at (https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk). This document is also available in Welsh.
RESEARCH STAFF ONLY All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.
STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity.
Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:				
2	Tick all boxes that apply:	Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
	Undergraduate Student	☐	Taught Postgraduate Student	☐	Postgraduate Research Student	☐

3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	
4	Campus:	
5	E-mail address:	
6	Contact Telephone Number:	
	For students:	
7	Student Number:	
8	Programme of Study:	
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

1	Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)		**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
					Date	
2	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known): *Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval*	Research Degrees Committee	☐			
		Institute Research Committee	☐			
		Other (write in)	☐			

SECTION C: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

	Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.	
1	**UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice**	☐
2	**UWTSD Research Data Management Policy**	☐

3	*[List any other relevant documents here]*	☐

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

If there are external collaborators then you should gain consent from the contact persons to share their personal data with the university. If there are no external collaborators then leave this section blank and continue to section E.

1	Institution					
2	Contact person name					
3	Contact person e-mail address					
4	Is your research externally funded?		**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
5	Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship?		**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
6	Are you specifically employed to undertake this research in either a paid or voluntary capacity?	Voluntary	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
7		Employed	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
8	Is the research being undertaken within an existing UWTSD Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP)?	If YES then the permission question below does not need to be answered.	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
9	Has permission to undertake the research has been provided by the partner organisation?	(If YES attach copy) If NO the application cannot continue	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐

Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

10	Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
	If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation (this may be a copy of an email if appropriate).				

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:			
2	Proposed start date:		Proposed end date:	
	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words per section) **Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the points below:** • *Purpose of Research Activity* • *Proposed Research Question* • *Aims of Research Activity* • *Objectives of Research Activity* Demonstrate, briefly, how <u>**Existing Research**</u> has informed the proposed activity and explain			

	• *What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge* • *How it addresses an area of importance.*
3	**Purpose of Research Activity** (this box should expand as you type)
4	**Research Question** (this box should expand as you type)
5	**Aims of Research Activity** (this box should expand as you type)
6	**Objectives of Research Activity** (this box should expand as you type)
	Proposed methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that **may** be used in the research activity, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here, but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.
7	 (this box should expand as you type)
	Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.
8	 (this box should expand as you type)
	Research activity outside of the UK If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants. If you live in the country where you will do the research then please state this.

9	
	(this box should expand as you type)

10	Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents **NOT** publicly available?	NO	☐
		YES	☐
11	If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with the current data protection law of the country in question and that of England and Wales. *(this box should expand as you type)*		

	Does your research relate to one or more of the seven aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?	**YES**	**NO**
12	A prosperous Wales	☐	☐
13	A resilient Wales	☐	☐
14	A healthier Wales	☐	☐
15	A more equal Wales	☐	☐
16	A Wales of cohesive communities	☐	☐
17	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	☐	☐
18	A globally responsible Wales	☐	☐
19	If YES to any of the above, please give details:		
	(this box should expand as you type)		

SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity

	Will the research activity include:	**YES**	**NO**
1	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☐	☐
2	Use of interviews?	☐	☐
3	Use of focus groups?	☐	☐
4	Use of participant diaries?	☐	☐
5	Use of video or audio recording?	☐	☐
6	Use of computer-generated log files?	☐	☐

7	Participant observation with their knowledge?	☐	☐
8	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	☐
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☐
10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☐
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☐
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☐
13	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☐
14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☐
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☐
16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?	☐	☐
17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.		
	Details of any other primary data collection method: (this box should expand as you type)	☐	☐

If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and **may** be exempt from **some** of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION G: Intended Participants
If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

	Who are the intended participants:	**YES**	**NO**
1	Students or staff at the University?	☐	☐
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☐	☐
3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	☐
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☐	☐
5	Prisoners?	☐	☐
6	Young offenders?	☐	☐
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☐
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☐

9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.		
	Details of any other participant groups: (this box should expand as you type)	☐	☐

	Participant numbers and source Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?	
10	How many participants are expected?	*(this box should expand as you type)*
11	Who will the participants be?	*(this box should expand as you type)*
12	How will you identify the participants?	*(this box should expand as you type)*

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☐	☐	☐
14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☐	☐	☐
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☐	☐	☐
16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☐	☐	☐
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☐	☐	☐
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☐	☐	☐
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☐	☐	☐
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☐	☐	☐
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☐	☐	☐
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			

	(this box should expand as you type)			

	Information for participants:	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
24	Will participants be paid?	☐	☐	☐
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☐	☐	☐
26	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	☐	☐
27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	☐	☐
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			
	(this box should expand as you type)			

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

1.	**2. Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them.** If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.		
3. 1	**4. Full risk assessment completed and appended?**	**5. Yes**	**6.** ☐
		7. No	**8.** ☐
2	**Risks to participants** For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information		
	Risk to participants: *(this box should expand as you type)*	*How you will mitigate the risk to participants:* *(this box should expand as you type)*	
3	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities		
	(this box should expand as you type)		
4	**Risks to the investigator** For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest		

	Risk to the investigator:	*How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator:*
	(this box should expand as you type)	*(this box should expand as you type)*
5	**University/institutional risks** For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University:	*How you will mitigate the risk to the University:*
	(this box should expand as you type)	*(this box should expand as you type)*
6	**Environmental risks** For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment:	*How you will mitigate the risk to environment:*
	(this box should expand as you type)	*(this box should expand as you type)*

	Disclosure and Barring Service			
	If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
7	Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate?	☐	☐	☐
8	If YES, please give the certificate number. If the certificate number is not available please write "Pending"; in this case any ethical approval will be subject to providing the appropriate certificate number.			

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

1	**Feedback** What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?
	(this box should expand as you type)
2	**Informed consent** Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation.
	(this box should expand as you type)
3	**Confidentiality / Anonymity**

	Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.		
	(this box should expand as you type)		

SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 "GDPR" and the Data Protection Act 2018 "DPA")?	**YES**	**NO**
1	*"Personal data" means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.*	☐	☐
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
2	*(this box should expand as you type)*		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	**YES**	**NO**
3	*"Special category data" means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects' –* *(a) racial or ethnic origin,* *(b) political opinions,* *(c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature,* *(d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992),* *(e) physical or mental health or condition,* *(f) sexual life,* *(g) genetics,* *(h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),*	☐	☐
	If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
4	*(this box should expand as you type)*		

	Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?	**YES**	**NO**
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☐	☐
6	University computers?	☐	☐

		YES	NO
7	Private company computers?	☐	☐
8	Home or other personal computers?	☐	☐
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☐	☐
10	"Cloud" storage or websites?	☐	☐
11	Other – specify:	☐	☐
12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation:		
	(this box should expand as you type)		

	Data Protection		
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	**YES**	**NO**
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☐	☐
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☐	☐
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	☐
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	☐	☐
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☐	☐
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☐
19	Use of data management system?	☐	☐
20	Data archiving?	☐	☐
21	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and any international equivalents, where appropriate):		
	(this box should expand as you type)		
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		
	(this box should expand as you type)		
23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		

	(this box should expand as you type)
24	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.
	(this box should expand as you type)
25	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/). If so please explain. (*Most relevant to academic staff*)
	(this box should expand as you type)

26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	**YES**	☐
27	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	**YES**	☐

SECTION K: Declaration

	The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants**.** In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/		
1	**Signature of applicant:**		**Date:**

For STUDENT Submissions:

2	Director of Studies/Supervisor:		**Date:**
3	Signature:		

For STAFF Submissions:

4	Academic Director/ Assistant Dean:		**Date:**
5	Signature:		

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☐	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
☐	I have completed **ALL RELEVANT** sections of the form in full.
☐	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☐	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (**where appropriate**)
☐	I have attached a full risk assessment (where appropriate) *ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT*
☐	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
☐	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.

RESEARCH STUDENTS ONLY   Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk).
RESEARCH STAFF ONLY   All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.	

Figure 20: shows the Application for Ethical Approval Form for the study titled *Nollywood: challenges, heritage practice and storytelling* (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2024).

Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of a doctoral research project titled *Nollywood: Challenges, Heritage Practice, and Storytelling*, which examines the role of Nollywood in preserving and promoting Nigerian cultural heritage through storytelling. The questionnaire is intended for professionals working within the Nigerian film industry. Your responses will remain confidential and are intended solely for academic analysis. Please answer each question as openly and thoughtfully as possible, drawing on your personal experience and professional insights.

1. What patterns have you observed in the themes or stories told within Nollywood productions?

2. How do these stories reflect or shape Nigeria's cultural identity and heritage?

3. What are your main objectives or motivations when creating or contributing to Nollywood films?

4. In your view, what should scriptwriters or directors do differently to strengthen the portrayal of Nigerian stories and heritage?

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5. How can Nollywood balance commercial success with the need to preserve cultural authenticity?

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6. How would you describe your level and nature of professional engagement in Nollywood?

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7. What key challenges currently limit the ability of Nollywood to tell culturally rich or diverse stories?

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8. What improvements do you believe are necessary in terms of production quality, funding, or industry governance?

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9. How effective do you think Nollywood's storytelling techniques are in projecting Nigerian culture locally and internationally?

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│                                         │
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10. What role should government agencies or financial institutions play in supporting the sustainability of the film industry?

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11. How do global platforms and technological changes affect the authenticity of Nigerian cultural representation in Nollywood?

12. In what ways can ethical practices, mentorship, and professional standards be improved in the industry?

13. How does Nollywood contribute to preserving Nigeria's collective memory and national identity?

14. What do you envision as the future of Nollywood in promoting and protecting Nigerian heritage worldwide?

Thank you for your invaluable time and for sharing your professional expertise. Your contribution is essential to a deeper understanding of Nollywood's cultural significance.

Figure 21: shows the Questionnaire used for the doctoral research study titled *Nollywood: Challenges, Heritage Practice, and Storytelling* (Author's work, 2024).

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Interview Questions for the Study

Study Title: *Nollywood: Challenges, Heritage Practice and Storytelling*

This semi-structured interview guide was used with Nollywood practitioners to explore how Nigerian heritage, identity, and storytelling are represented and sustained in film production. The questions were designed to encourage open and reflective discussion based on participants' professional experience.

1. How does Nollywood act as a custodian of Nigerian heritage and collective memory?
2. How are elements of indigenous knowledge systems—such as proverbs and oral traditions—integrated into your storytelling approach?
3. How has Nollywood shaped Nigerian cultural identity locally and globally?
4. How do you maintain authenticity when adapting indigenous stories for modern audiences?
5. To what extent do commercial pressures influence the representation of Nigerian heritage?
6. How can filmmakers avoid cultural exaggeration or stereotyping?
7. What key production or funding challenges affect culturally rich storytelling?
8. How effective are funding schemes, such as those offered by the Bank of Industry, in supporting filmmakers?

9. What policy or institutional reforms would strengthen professionalism and ethics in Nollywood?
10. How have streaming platforms and global audiences impacted the authenticity of storytelling?
11. Does globalisation enhance or dilute Nigeria's film culture?
12. How can Nollywood strike a balance between local narratives and global appeal?
13. What improvements are needed in the film industry regarding location security, costume design, mentorship, training, ethical standards, and government support?
14. What is your vision for Nollywood's future as a heritage-preserving institution?
15. How can stakeholders ensure its sustainability for future generations?

Figure 22: Semi-Structured Interview Questions for the Doctoral Research Study Titled *Nollywood: Challenges, Heritage Practice, and Storytelling* (Author's work, 2024).