



The Impact of Digital Streaming Platforms on the Nigerian Film Industry: Changing Production, Distribution, and Audience Consumption Patterns

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Abstract: The Nigerian film industry, widely known as Nollywood, has undergone substantial technological and industrial transformation from celluloid and analogue video production to digital filmmaking and internet-based distribution. One of the most significant developments in this transition is the growth of video-on-demand (VOD) and over-the-top (OTT) streaming platforms. This article examines the impact of digital streaming platforms on the Nigerian film industry, with particular attention to changes in film production, distribution, exhibition, revenue structures, and audience consumption. The study adopts a qualitative documentary research design and draws on peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, book chapters, and scholarly studies of Nollywood, digital distribution, streaming cultures, informal media economies, and platformisation. The study argues that streaming has widened the geographical circulation of Nigerian films, created new production opportunities, encouraged higher technical standards, and strengthened Nollywood's access to international audiences. It has also contributed to the emergence of films produced specifically for streaming platforms and has changed the ways Nigerian audiences access and consume screen content. At the audience level, streaming has increased flexibility, portability, and individual control over viewing, particularly through smartphones and other connected devices. However, these developments are accompanied by significant challenges, including high data costs, inadequate digital infrastructure, unequal access to technology, piracy, limited revenue transparency,



contractual inequality, precarious creative labour, and dependence on powerful international platforms. The article concludes that streaming should neither be regarded as a complete solution to Nollywood's longstanding structural problems nor as a replacement for cinema, television, and other distribution channels. Rather, it represents a new layer of the Nigerian audiovisual ecosystem. Its long-term benefits will depend on stronger local production capacity, diversified distribution, improved digital infrastructure, fairer platform relationships, effective copyright protection, and the ability of Nigerian filmmakers to retain meaningful control over their intellectual and cultural resources.

Keywords: Nollywood, digital streaming, Netflix, video-on-demand, film distribution, audience consumption, platformisation, Nigerian film industry

Introduction

Nollywood occupies an important position within contemporary African and global screen culture. The Nigerian film industry developed in distinctive ways in response to the country's economic, technological, and institutional circumstances. Its rapid expansion during the early 1990s was closely associated with the rise of affordable video technology and the decline of conventional celluloid filmmaking. Rather than depending entirely on the capital-intensive production and distribution structures associated with established cinema industries, Nigerian filmmakers and entrepreneurs developed a relatively flexible system based on low-cost production, informal financing, rapid circulation, and direct access to audiences.

Jedlowski (2012) describes this historical configuration as "small screen cinema," a form of filmmaking located between conventional cinema and television. The concept is useful because it demonstrates that Nollywood did not simply imitate existing international models of filmmaking. Instead, it developed a distinctive industrial and cultural form in response to local conditions.

The early Nollywood model relied heavily on physical media. Video cassettes, Video Compact Discs (VCDs), and later Digital Versatile Discs (DVDs) were distributed through



marketers, retailers, informal vendors, and personal networks. These networks enabled Nigerian films to circulate extensively within Nigeria, throughout Africa, and among Nigerian and African diaspora communities. At the same time, the informal nature of the distribution system created serious problems concerning copyright protection, piracy, and the ability of producers to capture the economic value generated by their films.

Larkin (2004) demonstrates that piracy was deeply connected to the infrastructure through which Nigerian video films circulated. Similarly, Lobato (2010) argues that informal economies were not merely peripheral to Nollywood but were central to the industry's development. This historical background is important because it shows that Nollywood has always been technologically adaptive and commercially innovative.

Digital technology subsequently transformed the production and distribution environment. Digital cameras, computer-based editing, affordable post-production software, and internet connectivity reduced some of the barriers associated with filmmaking. These technologies also created new opportunities for financing, publicity, marketing, and distribution. Ebelebe (2019) observes that Nigerian filmmakers increasingly adopted online funding and distribution strategies as they attempted to participate in an expanding digital global marketplace.

The movement toward online distribution did not begin with Netflix. YouTube and iROKOTv were important earlier developments in the digital circulation of Nigerian films. Campanini (2025) demonstrates that iROKOTv played an important role in the online distribution of Nollywood films before Netflix became a major participant in the Nigerian market. This historical point is significant because it prevents the history of Nigerian streaming from being reduced to the arrival of foreign streaming corporations.

Netflix nevertheless introduced a new level of international platform power into the Nigerian audiovisual environment. Its involvement connected Nigerian productions more directly to a global subscription-based streaming infrastructure and increased the visibility of Nigerian films among international audiences. Jedlowski (2022) argues that Netflix's intervention should be understood within the longer history of Nigerian film production and distribution rather than as the beginning of Nollywood's internationalisation.



Streaming therefore represents more than a change in where films are watched. It can influence what kinds of films are produced, how they are financed, which rights are negotiated, how films are marketed, and how audiences are measured. Simon (2022), for example, identifies the emergence of "portal films" produced specifically for streaming platforms. This development demonstrates that distribution platforms can increasingly influence production itself.

Audience practices have also changed. Traditional Nollywood viewing was commonly associated with television sets, video players, physical copies, family gatherings, and shared domestic spaces. Streaming enables viewers to select films independently and consume them through smartphones, tablets, computers, and smart televisions. Simon (2024) describes this transformation through the idea of "pocket videos," highlighting the increasing portability of Nigerian screen content.

The central argument of this article is that digital streaming has contributed to a structural reorganisation of Nollywood. It has created new opportunities for production, distribution, financing, and international circulation while simultaneously introducing new forms of economic and technological dependency. The important question is therefore not simply whether streaming is beneficial or harmful to Nollywood. Rather, the critical issue is how its opportunities, costs, and forms of power are distributed among filmmakers, platforms, audiences, and other industry stakeholders.

The study addresses the following questions:

1. How has digital streaming transformed film production practices in Nigeria?
2. How has streaming changed the distribution and transnational circulation of Nigerian films?
3. In what ways has streaming altered Nigerian audience consumption patterns?
4. What economic and professional opportunities have emerged from streaming?
5. What technological, economic, and cultural challenges accompany platformisation?
6. What strategies can strengthen Nollywood's position within the digital streaming ecosystem?

Conceptual Clarification

Digital Streaming Platforms



Digital streaming platforms are internet-based services that deliver audiovisual content to users through online networks rather than through physical media. Streaming services operate through different commercial models, including subscription video-on-demand (SVOD), advertising-supported video-on-demand (AVOD), and transactional video-on-demand (TVOD).

SVOD platforms require users to pay a subscription fee for access to a catalogue of content. AVOD services generate revenue primarily through advertising, while TVOD services generally require users to pay for individual films or programmes. Some platforms combine two or more of these models.

In the Nigerian context, streaming platforms include international services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, as well as locally developed or Africa-focused services. YouTube has also played an important role in the online circulation of Nigerian audiovisual content.

Nollywood

Nollywood is used in this article as a broad term referring to Nigeria's film and video industry. It encompasses the traditional video-film industry, theatrical cinema, television-oriented productions, digital filmmaking, online productions, and films distributed through streaming platforms.

However, Nollywood should not be understood as a completely homogeneous industry. Nigeria has multiple linguistic, cultural, and regional film traditions, including English-language and indigenous-language productions. The contemporary industry therefore contains diverse production cultures, genres, audiences, and business models.

Platformisation

Platformisation refers to the growing influence of digital platforms over the production, distribution, circulation, and consumption of cultural products. It involves more than simply placing content online. Platforms provide technological infrastructures, establish commercial arrangements, collect audience data, use recommendation systems, and determine rules concerning access and visibility.

Simon (2021) demonstrates the importance of examining streaming within the specific technological and economic conditions of African markets. Streaming services operating in



Nigeria must contend with issues such as internet availability, affordability, digital inequality, and the distinctive behaviour of local audiences.

Methodology

This article adopts a qualitative documentary research design based on a critical synthesis of existing academic literature. The study draws on peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, academic book chapters, and recent research relating to Nollywood, digital distribution, streaming, informal media economies, platformisation, and audience consumption.

The literature was examined thematically under four principal areas: film production, film distribution, audience consumption, and the economic, technological, and cultural opportunities and challenges associated with streaming.

The study is interpretive rather than statistical. It does not attempt to calculate current streaming revenues or provide original audience statistics. Instead, it brings together findings from existing scholarship to explain how digital streaming is affecting different stages of the Nigerian film value chain.

The study has a clear limitation. It does not contain original interviews, questionnaires, audience surveys, or proprietary platform data. Consequently, it does not claim to provide a direct measurement of the current size of the Nigerian streaming market. Future studies could complement this literature-based approach through interviews with filmmakers, platform executives, distributors, and audiences, as well as through quantitative audience research and analysis of platform data.

Historical Development of Nollywood and the Digital Transition

The history of Nollywood provides an important foundation for understanding its contemporary relationship with digital streaming. The industry's development was closely connected to technological adaptation and the search for affordable methods of film production and distribution.

The video boom of the early 1990s allowed filmmakers to produce films at substantially lower costs than conventional celluloid filmmaking. This development enabled entrepreneurs



and filmmakers to enter the industry without depending entirely on the institutional infrastructure of conventional cinema.

The result was a flexible production and distribution system. Films could be produced quickly and circulated through informal networks. This model helped Nollywood develop an extensive audience within Nigeria and beyond.

Jedlowski (2012) argues that the informal character of Nigerian video production and distribution contributed to the development of a distinctive form of "small screen cinema." The success of the industry was therefore closely related to its ability to adapt production and distribution to local conditions.

Physical media were particularly important. VCDs and DVDs enabled producers and marketers to distribute films to large numbers of consumers. Informal networks also allowed Nigerian films to travel across national borders.

However, piracy became deeply embedded in this distribution environment. Larkin (2004) shows that piracy should be understood not simply as an external threat imposed on the industry but as part of the wider infrastructure through which Nigerian video films circulated.

Lobato (2010) similarly argues that Nollywood demonstrates how informal economic systems can contribute to the development of successful creative industries. The Nigerian case challenges the assumption that formal institutional structures are always necessary for the growth of a media industry.

The emergence of digital filmmaking created another stage in this development. Digital cameras, editing software, and computer-based production tools lowered some technical barriers and encouraged new forms of filmmaking. Ebelebe (2019) shows that digital technologies also created new opportunities for online financing and distribution.

The next major transition involved digital delivery. Instead of manufacturing a physical copy for every potential consumer, producers could upload content to an online platform through which geographically dispersed audiences could access it.

YouTube provided one of the earliest large-scale online routes for Nigerian content, while iROKOTv demonstrated the possibility of a dedicated commercial streaming service for



Nollywood. Campanini (2025) shows that iROKOtv was already developing global distribution networks for Nigerian films before Netflix's major expansion into the Nigerian market.

Netflix therefore entered an industry with an existing history of transnational circulation. Miller (2012) demonstrates that Nollywood had already developed alternative global networks connecting Nigerian producers, distributors, marketers, and audiences around the world.

Streaming has consequently not created Nollywood's global character from nothing. Rather, it has formalised, intensified, and technologically transformed some of the international relationships that had previously been sustained through informal networks.

Digital Streaming and Film Production

Changes in Production Models

One of the most significant effects of streaming has been the emergence of new production models. Traditional Nollywood films were frequently produced with the expectation that they would circulate through physical media, television, or cinema.

Streaming has created another category of production: films designed primarily for digital platforms. Simon (2022) refers to these as "portal films." His research demonstrates that the emergence of portal filmmaking has created a new production environment while also maintaining forms of informality and precarious labour.

Productions intended for streaming platforms may have to meet specific technical and delivery requirements. These requirements can influence cinematography, sound recording, editing, colour grading, post-production, and other production decisions.

Streaming can therefore encourage professionalisation. Greater demand for high-quality productions may increase opportunities for cinematographers, editors, sound designers, colourists, production designers, visual-effects specialists, and other technical professionals.

At the same time, higher production standards may increase costs. Producers with limited financial resources may find it more difficult to compete for major platform opportunities.

The result is therefore contradictory. Streaming can raise the technical standards of visible Nigerian productions while simultaneously increasing the financial resources required to produce films capable of competing in the digital marketplace.



Production Quality and Aesthetic Standards

The contemporary Nollywood industry operates within a global audiovisual environment. Nigerian films can appear on the same digital platforms as American, European, Asian, and other African productions.

This environment creates pressure to improve cinematography, sound, editing, production design, visual effects, and general technical quality.

Ezepue (2021) demonstrates that contemporary Nollywood has moved considerably beyond the technical conditions associated with the early video-film era. The industry's transformation is visible in production methods, aesthetic choices, distribution strategies, and audience targeting.

Streaming can reinforce this movement by making technical quality increasingly important to filmmakers seeking international audiences.

However, technical sophistication should not be confused with artistic excellence. A technically polished film may still suffer from weak storytelling, while a relatively modest production may possess considerable cultural and artistic value.

Consequently, the pursuit of platform-friendly production standards should not result in the abandonment of creative experimentation or culturally distinctive filmmaking.

Changes in Genre and Storytelling

Streaming can also influence the kinds of stories that receive investment and visibility. Platforms operate within competitive markets and therefore seek content capable of attracting and retaining audiences.

This can create opportunities for Nigerian filmmakers to present local stories, genres, languages, and cultural experiences to audiences that might otherwise have limited access to them.

However, global distribution can also create pressure to produce stories that conform to perceived international expectations.

Filmmakers may consciously or unconsciously emphasise themes that they believe international audiences associate with Nigeria, including corruption, crime, ritualism, wealth, poverty, or social conflict.



Okwuowulu and Ogbonna (2025) identify this tension in their analysis of Nigerian film remakes distributed through Netflix. Their findings indicate that digitalisation and improved production quality can exist alongside recurring representations of social problems and negative stereotypes. The implication is that global visibility does not automatically guarantee balanced cultural representation.

Digital Streaming and Film Distribution

From Physical Distribution to On-Demand Access

Distribution is perhaps the most visible area of transformation created by streaming.

Under the traditional Nollywood model, films had to pass through physical distribution networks before reaching audiences. Producers, marketers, distributors, retailers, and informal vendors all played roles in moving films from production to consumption.

Streaming removes many of these physical stages. Once a film has been uploaded to a platform, it can potentially be accessed by audiences in multiple territories without the physical transportation of copies.

This significantly changes the geography of Nollywood distribution.

A Nigerian film can be made available to viewers in Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States, and other countries through a single digital platform.

The significance is particularly important for Nigerian diaspora audiences. Online access reduces the dependence on physical copies, specialist African retailers, and occasional television broadcasts.

Formalisation of Distribution

Streaming has also contributed to the formalisation of some aspects of Nollywood's distribution system.

Licensing agreements, digital rights management, platform contracts, subscription systems, and other formal mechanisms provide structured ways of distributing audiovisual content.

This formalisation can improve copyright management and create more predictable distribution arrangements.

However, formalisation does not necessarily mean equality.



Large streaming platforms possess technological infrastructure, international audiences, financial resources, and access to audience data. Individual producers may therefore enter negotiations from a position of comparatively limited bargaining power.

The key issue is consequently not simply whether distribution has become formalised but who controls the conditions under which formalisation takes place.

Global Reach and the Internationalisation of Nollywood

Streaming has increased the international visibility of Nigerian films.

Campanini (2025) demonstrates that the international distribution of Nollywood has a longer history that includes iROKOtv and other digital circulation networks. Nevertheless, major international streaming platforms have significantly expanded the potential audience for Nigerian productions.

This development has implications for Nigeria's cultural influence.

Nigerian films can communicate local languages, music, fashion, social practices, religious beliefs, histories, and contemporary experiences to audiences around the world.

Streaming can therefore contribute to cultural exchange and strengthen Nigeria's audiovisual presence internationally.

At the same time, international reach creates questions concerning ownership and control. If access to global audiences becomes heavily dependent on a small number of foreign platforms, increased visibility may coexist with increased dependence.

Streaming and Audience Consumption Patterns

From Communal Viewing to Individualised Consumption

Digital streaming has significantly changed the relationship between Nigerian audiences and films.

Traditional Nollywood viewing was often communal. Families, friends, and neighbours could gather around a television set or video player to watch the same film.

Streaming introduces a more individualised model.

A viewer can choose a film independently, determine when to watch it, pause and resume viewing, and select the device used for consumption.



This does not mean that communal viewing has disappeared. Rather, individualised on-demand viewing has developed alongside older forms of shared consumption.

Simon (2024) argues that streaming is reshaping the temporal, spatial, and social dimensions of Nigerian video consumption.

The viewer is no longer as dependent on a television schedule, cinema timetable, or physical copy.

Mobile Viewing

The smartphone is particularly important to the streaming environment because it combines internet connectivity, audiovisual playback, and portability.

Nigerian audiences can therefore watch films in locations beyond the traditional home environment.

Simon (2024) uses the expression "pocket videos" to capture this transformation. The concept reflects the movement from a form of video consumption strongly associated with domestic spaces toward a more mobile and individualised practice.

However, mobile streaming also exposes the limitations of Nigeria's digital infrastructure.

A smartphone alone does not guarantee access. Viewers also require electricity, network coverage, suitable data plans, and sufficient financial resources to sustain data consumption.

Audience Fragmentation

Streaming can simultaneously broaden and fragment audiences.

Under traditional distribution systems, a popular film could circulate widely through common physical and television networks. Streaming audiences may instead be divided across different platforms and subscription arrangements.

A film available on one platform may not be accessible to a viewer who subscribes to another.

Recommendation systems create another dimension of audience fragmentation. Platforms can personalise recommendations according to users' previous viewing behaviour.

Consequently, filmmakers increasingly compete not only for audiences but also for visibility within platform catalogues and recommendation systems.

Economic Opportunities Created by Streaming



New Revenue Opportunities

Streaming creates additional opportunities for Nigerian filmmakers to generate revenue.

Depending on the platform and contractual arrangement, income may arise through licensing, subscriptions, advertising, rentals, purchases, or other forms of digital exploitation.

The most significant advantage is diversification.

A filmmaker can potentially combine theatrical exhibition, television licensing, YouTube distribution, local streaming, and international platform agreements.

Diversification reduces dependence on a single source of income and may provide producers with greater flexibility.

Access to International Capital

Streaming platforms can also introduce new forms of investment into Nigerian film production.

International platforms may finance, license, commission, or acquire Nigerian productions. Such arrangements can provide resources for larger productions and create employment opportunities for filmmakers and technical personnel.

Ebelebe (2019) demonstrates how digital technologies have already created alternative approaches to financing and distribution.

Jedlowski (2022) further shows that Netflix's involvement added another significant layer of international participation in the Nigerian screen industry.

International investment can strengthen production capacity. However, it does not automatically produce industrial independence.

Where producers have few alternative sources of finance or distribution, international capital can become a source of dependency.

Challenges Associated With Digital Streaming

Digital Divide and Cost of Data

One of the most significant barriers to streaming in Nigeria is unequal access to digital infrastructure.

Streaming requires reliable electricity, internet connectivity, appropriate devices, and affordable data.



These resources are not equally available to all Nigerians.

Simon (2021) identifies internet availability and affordability as important challenges for streaming services operating in African markets.

This creates an important distinction between availability and accessibility.

A Nigerian film may be legally available online but practically inaccessible to a viewer who cannot afford the data required to stream it.

Consequently, streaming can remove geographical barriers while leaving economic and **technological barriers in place.**

Platform Dependency

Platform dependency is another important concern.

Large streaming companies possess technological infrastructures and international audience networks that individual Nigerian filmmakers cannot easily reproduce.

They can also control recommendation systems, catalogue visibility, audience data, and access to international markets.

This gives platforms substantial influence over the conditions under which Nigerian content reaches audiences.

Jedlowski (2022) shows that Netflix's involvement in Nigeria has generated both opportunities and controversies.

The issue should not therefore be framed as whether international platforms are inherently beneficial or harmful. The more important question is whether Nigerian producers possess sufficient bargaining power to establish equitable relationships with these platforms.

Revenue Transparency

Streaming can make the economic performance of films less visible than traditional cinema.

Box-office performance can often be estimated from ticket sales and reported cinema figures.

Streaming platforms may provide producers with more limited information about audience behaviour, viewing duration, and revenue calculations.

Limited access to data can weaken producers' bargaining positions.



If producers do not know how many people watched their films or how much economic value those films generated, they may have difficulty assessing whether a licensing agreement was fair. Greater transparency would therefore strengthen the industry's ability to negotiate sustainable commercial arrangements.

Contractual Power

Streaming contracts can involve complex questions concerning licensing periods, exclusivity, territories, intellectual property, sequel rights, remake rights, and future exploitation.

A contract may appear financially attractive in the short term while limiting a producer's ability to exploit the film through other channels in the future.

Odedina (2023) argues that Nollywood producers should avoid excessive reliance on exclusive online distribution arrangements because such arrangements can have implications for traditional cinema exhibition.

The industry therefore needs stronger legal and business expertise to negotiate digital distribution agreements.

Piracy

Streaming has made legitimate digital access easier, but it has not eliminated piracy.

Unauthorised downloading, illegal streaming websites, file sharing, and unauthorised redistribution through social media continue to create challenges.

The problem therefore has not disappeared; it has changed form.

Effective copyright protection must be combined with affordable and convenient legal access.

Consumers are more likely to use legitimate services when legal content is reasonably accessible and competitively priced.

Cultural Representation and Platform Power

The international circulation of Nollywood raises important questions concerning cultural representation.

When Nigerian films enter global streaming catalogues, they become part of an international cultural marketplace in which they compete with productions from different countries and cultural traditions.



There is a risk that filmmakers may emphasise familiar images of Nigeria because they believe such representations will appeal to international audiences.

Themes such as ritualism, corruption, crime, extreme wealth, poverty, and social conflict can become particularly visible.

Okwuowulu and Ogbonna (2025) identify concerns about the repeated representation of negative social themes in Nigerian film remakes distributed through Netflix.

However, it would be inaccurate to portray Nigerian filmmakers as passive recipients of foreign platform power.

Mohammed and Fawe (2025), in their analysis of *A Tribe Called Judah*, argue that Nollywood retains significant capacity to produce and distribute successful films independently. Their study presents the relationship between Netflix and Nollywood as an encounter between two media powers rather than a simple relationship between a dominant platform and a powerless local industry.

This perspective is important.

Nigerian filmmakers possess audiences, cultural knowledge, production experience, local distribution networks, and commercially successful storytelling traditions.

The relationship between Nollywood and global streaming platforms should therefore be understood as negotiated and dynamic.

The challenge is to ensure that global accessibility does not require Nigerian filmmakers to surrender cultural specificity or creative autonomy.

Streaming and the Future of Nigerian Cinema

Streaming should not be interpreted as the inevitable death of cinema or television.

Different forms of exhibition continue to serve different purposes.

Cinema provides communal viewing, event value, publicity, and opportunities for box-office revenue.

Television remains important because it reaches audiences who may not subscribe to streaming services.

YouTube provides relatively open digital distribution and supports independent creators.



Streaming provides flexibility, convenience, and international circulation.

The future of Nollywood is therefore likely to involve hybrid distribution rather than the complete replacement of one medium by another.

A Nigerian film may move through several stages:

Cinema → Streaming → Television → Digital rental/advertising → Long-term catalogue circulation

The exact sequence will vary according to the film, its financing structure, contractual arrangements, and target audience.

The important strategic issue is therefore not which medium will replace the others but how the different channels can complement one another.

Discussion

The literature examined in this study reveals four major transformations associated with digital streaming in Nollywood.

First, streaming is influencing film production. The emergence of portal films demonstrates that distribution platforms can influence the production process itself. Technical specifications, platform expectations, financing arrangements, and anticipated audiences can affect creative and managerial decisions.

Second, streaming has transformed film distribution. Nigerian films can now circulate internationally without relying on the physical distribution networks that dominated the earlier video-film economy. This strengthens the international dimension of Nollywood.

Third, streaming has changed audience consumption. Nigerian viewers have greater control over when, where, how, and on which devices they consume films. Smartphones have particularly contributed to the portability and individualisation of viewing.

Fourth, streaming has altered industrial power relations. Nigerian producers have gained access to international audiences and sources of finance, but they increasingly interact with platforms that control valuable infrastructures, data, and routes to audiences.

These developments support a political-economic interpretation of platformisation.



The critical question is not simply whether Nigerian films are available online. The more important question is who controls the infrastructure through which those films circulate and who captures the economic value generated by that circulation.

If Nigerian audiovisual production becomes excessively dependent on a small number of international platforms, the industry could experience a new form of dependency even while enjoying greater international visibility.

On the other hand, if Nigerian producers, professional organisations, regulators, and local platforms develop stronger bargaining and technological capacities, streaming could contribute significantly to the professionalisation and international expansion of Nollywood.

The most sustainable approach is therefore platform pluralism rather than platform dependence. International platforms can remain important partners, but they should operate alongside Nigerian and African-owned platforms, cinema, television, YouTube, and other distribution channels.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen Nigerian-Owned Streaming Platforms

Nigerian and African streaming services should be encouraged as important components of the digital audiovisual economy. Strong local platforms can provide alternative routes to audiences and help retain a greater proportion of economic value within the Nigerian creative sector.

2. Improve Digital Infrastructure

Government and private-sector investment should continue to focus on broadband expansion, reliable electricity, mobile network infrastructure, and affordable internet access.

Without improvements in these areas, the benefits of streaming will remain unevenly distributed.

3. Improve Contractual Transparency

Film producers and professional associations should strengthen their legal and business capacity concerning streaming agreements.

Contracts should clearly address licensing duration, exclusivity, territorial rights, intellectual property, sequel and remake rights, revenue arrangements, and future exploitation.

4. Promote Multiple Distribution Channels



Filmmakers should avoid unnecessary dependence on a single distribution platform.

Where commercially feasible, productions should combine cinema, television, YouTube, local streaming services, and international VOD platforms.

5. Strengthen Digital Copyright Protection

Nigeria's copyright protection mechanisms must respond effectively to online piracy.

However, enforcement should be accompanied by affordable and convenient legitimate access to content.

6. Invest in Professional Training

Film schools, universities, professional guilds, and industry organisations should strengthen training in cinematography, sound design, editing, colour grading, visual effects, production management, digital marketing, intellectual property, and streaming distribution.

7. Preserve Cultural Diversity

International distribution should not require Nigerian filmmakers to abandon indigenous languages, histories, cultural traditions, or locally meaningful narratives.

Global accessibility should coexist with cultural specificity.

8. Encourage Audience Research

Nollywood producers should conduct more systematic audience research.

Research should examine factors such as age, location, income, language, device ownership, genre preference, data usage, and viewing behaviour.

Reliable audience information can help producers make better creative and distribution decisions.

9. Improve Industry Data Collection

Reliable information concerning streaming audiences, revenue, employment, production costs, and distribution should be developed.

Government agencies, professional organisations, researchers, and streaming platforms should explore appropriate mechanisms for improving industry data.

10. Develop a Balanced National Film Policy



National film policy should recognise the convergence of cinema, television, digital video, and streaming.

Government policy should therefore address the entire audiovisual ecosystem rather than concentrating exclusively on conventional cinema exhibition.

Conclusion

Digital streaming has become an important force in the restructuring of the Nigerian film industry. Its significance extends beyond the simple fact that Nigerian films can now be watched online. Streaming has affected production, financing, distribution, exhibition, marketing, audience behaviour, and international circulation.

At the level of production, streaming has encouraged new forms of filmmaking, including films produced specifically for digital portals. It has also contributed to increased attention to technical and professional standards. Nevertheless, streaming has not eliminated the informal relationships and precarious labour conditions that continue to characterise parts of Nollywood.

At the level of distribution, streaming has reduced geographical barriers and created new opportunities for Nigerian films to reach international audiences. This development builds upon Nollywood's older transnational networks rather than replacing them completely.

At the level of audience consumption, streaming has increased flexibility and portability. Nigerian viewers can increasingly select films according to their own schedules and watch them on personal devices. The movement from communal home-video consumption toward more individualised mobile viewing represents an important cultural transformation.

However, the benefits of streaming remain uneven.

High data costs, inadequate infrastructure, unreliable electricity, digital inequality, piracy, limited revenue transparency, contractual uncertainty, and unequal bargaining power continue to affect the industry.

Cultural representation also remains an important concern. Nigerian filmmakers operating within global platform environments must negotiate between local cultural specificity and international market expectations.

The future of Nollywood should therefore not depend on any single streaming platform.



Nigerian producers need stronger knowledge of intellectual property, digital rights, contracts, audience analytics, platform economics, and international distribution. Professional associations should strengthen collective bargaining and legal support, while government should provide policies and infrastructure capable of supporting sustainable digital production and distribution.

Streaming is best understood as a transformative but contested layer of the Nigerian film industry. It has the capacity to expand Nollywood's cultural and economic reach, but the value of that expansion will depend on who controls access to audiences, who receives the resulting revenue, how transparent platform relationships are, and whether Nigerian creators retain meaningful control over their intellectual and cultural property.

The strongest future for Nollywood is therefore not one in which Nigerian filmmakers become completely dependent on international streaming corporations. Rather, it is one in which Nigerian producers engage global platforms strategically while maintaining diversified distribution channels, strengthening local platforms, improving professional capacity, and preserving meaningful Nigerian control over the country's audiovisual resources.

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