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Abdalla Uba Adamu

The Political Economy of the Hausa Popular Cultural Industries

Culture is an expression of artistic and ethnographic portraits of the human condition. It is often captured perfectly through the medium of film, not only as entertainment, but also as a means of preserving a cultural heritage. Film production will usually have a profit motive, but in African film cultures this often comes at the expense of the artistic potential of the cultural heritage. This paper looks at how Hausa film production in northern Nigeria has become commodified and commercialized at the expense of cultural and artistic preservation. Using data from film distributors in Kano, northern Nigeria, it historically explores how market forces determine the future of film production in the region.

With my scientific background as a biologist, and seeing myself as an amateur anthropologist, I became fascinated by cultural production in the music, literature and films of the Hausa of northern Nigeria, particularly by the interfaces between Islamic cultural normative behavior and creative impulses. In 1996, a massive debate – which was echoed by Islamic scholars on various radio stations – developed in northern Nigeria around the unwelcome intrusion of the new forms of cultural production into Hausa popular culture. These criticisms were a catalyst for the creation of the Hisbah Corps in 2003, which had the social focus of implementing the Quranic injunction in Sura 3.104, as translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, which reads: "Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity."

The Hisbah Board that was created subsequently focused on eradicating social vices, including popular culture. I was drawn into the cultural dynamics of Hausa popular culture by the intensity of passions both in favor of and against the evolution and transformation of what was essentially a youth sub-culture. Realizing the potential of such a culture for our understanding of myriad theories in anthropological and communication studies alike, I embedded myself[1] in the community of producers of these cultural products

1. See S. Lewis et A. J. Russell, «Being Embedded: A Way Forward for Ethnographic Research», *Ethnography*, vol. 12, n° 3, 2011, p. 398-416.

through observational, structured, informal and formal interactivity, gaining their trust and acquiring access to hitherto undisclosed sources and resources on popular Hausa cultural production. This enabled me to gain deep insights into the field of Hausa popular culture. Adopting neither a "participant" nor a "non-participant" posture, I became an often neutral part of the cultural and productive landscape, taking no particular stand, passively and actively engaging with the field as it unfolded. This paper is the result of that process. I should stress, however, that my focus in this paper is specifically on how Hausa films (films produced in the Hausa language of northern Nigeria by an industry that is popularly referred to as Kanywood) became a commercial process rather than a way of preserving the cultural values of the Hausa people. The basis of this commercialization, which I do not delve into too deeply, since I am not focusing on film analysis, is the overarching reliance on the popularity of Hindi films among Hausa audiences – a situation Hausa filmmakers exploit by appropriating popular Hindi films (even including naming themselves after certain Hindi film stars and forming fan clubs for them locally[2]).

The data generated for this paper were therefore gathered in an unstructured, qualitative manner during sustained, and what I call "embedded ethnographic", fieldwork in Kano, northern Nigeria from 1999. As Dorland[3] has pointed out, the use of an ethnographic lens to examine cultural producers is part of both a broader cultural approach and an ethnographic turn within the social sciences. This, in turn, is tied to what Bruner[4] has termed the "anthropology of experience" of the cultural producer. Radically and originally proposed by Victor W. Turner in 1982 (and represented in 1986[5]), the anthropology of experience situates cultural production within an anthropological matrix and provides a more dynamic, embedded interactivity between the anthropologist and cultural producers in the field. Although I recorded some of my interactions in various media (tape, notes, video camera and still camera), I also used a large number of research assistants to analyze films for me to look for transnational elements that were "embedded",

2. A. U. Adamu, *Transglobal Media Flows and African Popular Culture: Revolution and Reaction in Muslim Hausa Popular Culture*, Kano, Visually Ethnographic Press, 2007.
3. A. Dorland, « Tell me why you Did that: Learning "Ethnography" from the Design Studio », *in* EPIC, *Conference Proceedings Ethnographic Praxis in Industry 2016*, Minneapolis/Hoboken, EPIC/Wiley-Blackwell, 2016, p. 135-153.
4. E. M. Bruner, « Ethnography as Narrative », *in* V. W. Turner et E. M. Bruner (dir.), *The Anthropology of Experience*, Urbana/Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1986, p. 139-158.
5. V. W. Turner et E. Turner, « Performing Ethnography », *The Drama Review*, vol. 26, n° 2, 1982, p. 33-50 ; V. W. Turner, « Dewey, Dilthey and Drama: An Essay in the Anthropology of Experience », *in* V. W. Turner et E. M. Bruner (dir.), *The Anthropology of Experience*, *op. cit.*, p. 33-44.

as it were, in the films, since many Hausa films especially draw their inspiration from Hindi films from the Bollywood industry in India. Nothing was left to chance, as anecdotes such as "mu haɗu a Bata" (let's meet at the Bata market in Kano to reflect the popularity of a particular film) became a taunting anthem used by brash new young filmmakers against the older, mostly TV-trained, filmmakers who are referred to as the "gumakan industry" (the untouchables of the film industry). My narrative therefore does not follow a structured referral system that acknowledges every anecdote, interactive episode or piece of material data, as to do so would be to produce a stilted narrative that does not flow. Again, I hide behind the cover of embedded ethnography as a methodology to enable me to capture events as they unfolded in a more natural way.

The commodification of culture explores critical theory in a cultural landscape dominated by capital. As Gunster[6] has pointed out, it is only recently that "culture" and "commodity" have begun to represent different meanings and values. I use the term "commodification" to refer to a marketing strategy adopted by Hausa filmmakers to sell their creative works as commodities rather than cultural artifacts. This means that from my observations, Hausa filmmakers do not reflect the aesthetic and artistic qualities of major industries such as the French, German or Soviet cinema as canvases for cultural and aesthetic preservation, but rather see films as commodities to be sold to consumers for profit, and where there is no profit to be made, they simply choose another commodity to sell. This is reflected, for instance, in the way the majority of Hausa film marketers moved on to selling Android phones and accessories, as well as clothing, when the market became unstable in 2013.

Whereas "culture" refers to an economic, commercial and industrial logic and to activities associated with the capitalist market place, "commodity" connotes "just about any human thought or action that kept its distance from, or even deliberately opposed, the instrumental rationality associated with the commodity form[7]". Over the years, however, the distance between the concepts of "culture" and "commodity" has become smaller due to what Gunter calls the "expansionary inertia of the culture industry[8]". As Gunster further explains, "from the sublime heights of great art to the everyday rituals of folklore and custom, culture traced a set of practices and experiences that were insulated against rule by the profit motive[9]".

6. S. Gunster, *Capitalizing on Culture: Critical Theory for Cultural Studies*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2004.
7. *Ibid*., p. 3.
8. *Ibid*.
9. *Ibid*.

The commodification of culture therefore focuses on what happens when culture is produced on a mass consumption scale and distributed in direct competition with other locally-produced cultural products[10]. The Frankfurt theorists Adorno and Horkheimer[11] led the way in arguing that by its very nature, mass-produced entertainment aims to appeal to vast audiences and therefore both the intellectual stimulation of high art and the basic release of low art[12]. In Africa, as Barber has noted,

> "If African popular culture has become a field, however, it's not really clear where that field's boundaries lie or by what criteria certain forms are included or excluded, and this is because of the ambiguities of the term 'popular'. It's a slippery, disputed term wherever it is used[13]."

Commodification is the boundary between high and mass culture. While mainly used in critical studies of the tourism industry and its cultural import[14], the term has come to be applied to media industries that have profit, rather than cultural aesthetics or preservation, as their primary motive[15]. This is premised on the assumption that while high culture sells to exclusive, discerning consumers, low mass produced culture targeted at non-cerebral aesthetics sells in larger quantities. Thus, the commodification of culture, especially in media studies, feeds into the political economy of production.

Synthesizing from various perspectives, Mosco distills political economy into "the social relations, particularly the power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources. This makes the products of communication, particularly books, newspapers, films, videos and indeed, their audiences, primary resources for studies in political economy[16]". However, it is instructive to note that "critical political economy" is sometimes used as a descriptor to separate its use as a tool of media analysis from classical political economy theorists such as Adam Smith. Golding and

10. See, for instance, H. M. Enzensberger, *The Consciousness Industry: On Literature, Polictis and the Media*, New York, Continuum Books/Seabury Press, 1974.
11. For example in T. W. Adorno et M. Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, New York, Herder and Herder, 1972.
12. J. D. Peters, *The Subtlety of Horkheimer and Adorno*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2003, p. 68.
13. K. Barber, *A History of African Popular Culture*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 7.
14. For example, C. Ryan et M. Aicken (dir.), *Indigenous Tourism: The Commodification and Management of Culture*, Amsterdam, Elsevier, 2005 ; K. J. James, *Tourism, Land and Landscape in Ireland: The Commodification of Culture*, New York/Londres, Routledge, 2014.
15. T. W Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, New York/Londres, Routledge, 1991.
16. V. Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication*, Londres, Sage Publications, 2009, p. 24.

Murdock[17], for instance, illustrate this separation by arguing that political economy analyses of the media are holistic, and the economy is essentially an interconnected network that includes society, culture and politics.

This paper analyzes the commodification of the Hausa cultural industries in the three interconnected domains of video film production, distribution and marketing. I situate my arguments within a historical matrix of the development of Hausa visual cultures. Theoretically, I tend to favor the economic perspective offered by Wasko's[18] analysis of the political economy of American film production, where she argues that "beginning very early in the history of American film, there has been an important relationship between bankers and filmmakers". This situates film in a capitalist economy as a commodity, despite its artistic and ideological potential. I explore this relationship in the Hausa film industry through an embedded ethnographic insertion of myself as a neutral stakeholder observing the various actors, events and processes from 2000, when the Hausa creative industries were first subjected to more intense criticism from the religious public sphere regarding their "Westernization", which led to the banning of all creative industries, particularly films, and later to the creation of a Censorship Board in Kano that determines what particular media cultural productions may be sold to the public. This method of ethnography, which was mainly proposed by Turner and Turner[19], and which they have labeled "performing ethnography", provided an opportunity for extended field work and a close reading of the participants in the process. For instance, my own house, which is located on a university campus, has been used as a location to shoot twelve Hausa films, thus giving me more opportunities to engage with producers. I also led an International Conference on Hausa films in 2003, editing the resulting book of proceedings in 2004, and have headed five award committees that recognize the industry's achievements. My position as an "outside insider" meant that I was accepted, and it gave me access to information on the development of the industry that I have weaved into a historical narrative for this paper. I did not record every encounter, rather noting significant stages in the development of the particularly Hausa film industry as it unfolded and was narrated by the participants themselves. Most of my "embedded ethnography" took place between 1999 and the present day, principally in Kano and Kaduna States in northern Nigeria.

17. P. Golding et G. Murdock, « Culture, Communications and Political Economy », *in* M. Gurevitch et J. Curran (dir.), *Mass Media and Society. Fourth Edition*, Londres, Arnold, 1996, p. 11-30.
18. J. Wasko, « The Political Economy of the American Film Industry », *Media Culture and Society*, vol. 3, n° 2, 1981, p. 135.
19. V. W. Turner et E. Turner, « Performing Ethnography », art. cité.

My analysis of dozens of video films, as well as hours of interactions with marketers, producers, session musicians, singers, writers and magazine editors also provided me with primary ethnographic insight into the political economy of the contemporary Hausa visual cultural industry, as well as its commodification.

The Production of Hausa Films

The Hausa are predominantly found in northern Nigeria, but they are also widely present in the Republic of Niger, where Hausa is the majority language[20]. The language has also spread across the West African sub-region, from Chad and Cameroon to Ghana, Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone. The Hausa in these West African countries are predominantly traders and form a core resistant group of immigrants who have refused to give up their language even though they live in a linguistically plural society. Cultural dynamics, particularly cultural representation in any form of media, are a major factor in the digestibility of messages encoded in the various forms of popular culture. The media – especially visual media, which depict and reconstruct as well as deconstruct – represent particular episodes in the lives of individuals.

One of the main economic focus areas of young Hausa in Nigeria is video film production in the local language. With extremely limited exceptions, most commercial Hausa films revolve around pastiches of Hindi films in one form or another that are aimed, as the video filmmakers themselves insist, at urban Hausa children, youth and homemakers. This tallies with the commodification of culture perspective of this paper, as these filmmakers apparently lack the wherewithal to make films that convey specific cultural motifs. For instance, when Hausa viewers objected to Hausa copying Indian films in letters to a Hausa entertainment magazine, one of the leading stars of the industry retorted:

> "…singing and dancing sell our films. I know some would argue that singing and dancing are not in our culture and that we borrowed them… but many viewers wanted this, and therefore there is nothing we can do except appease them. I would agree with you more if you urged that we should interject the singing and dancing with Hausa culture[21]."

20. P. J. Jaggar, *Hausa*, Amsterdam/Philadelphie, John Benjamins, 2001.
21. The first major interview with Ali Nuhu, *Fim*, March 2000, p. 15.

The same filmmaker repeated the commodification mantra of Hausa films when he replied in response to the lack of Hausa culture in Hausa films:

> "I am a filmmaker because I want to entertain. You often hear viewers claiming they want a video that shows (Hausa) culture, and yet when you make such a video, they just leave you with it (and don't buy it). This year, a video was released that showed pure Hausa culture, but it was not commercially successful. In fact, a viewer had the cheek to write to a magazine to complain about the video; would that be an encouragement for the producer[22]?"

This commodification comes in two forms, therefore. The first is the appropriation of Hindi films, and the second interjects the choreographed singing and dance typical of these Hindi films. Since Hausa culture is a staid one, it frowns on this kind of public display, relegating such practices to permitted country festivals, due to the increasing Islamicity of Kano.

Even the Hollywood cinema faces similar resentment. As Tzanelli[23] reported on the French reaction to Hollywood's *Da Vinci Code* (directed by Ron Howard, 2006), which attracted tourists to France after they had seen the film:

> "The tourists' desire to see the locations in which some filmed 'mystic rituals' allegedly took place irritated a life-long parishioner at the Church of Saint-Sulpice in Paris. He blurted to another reporter: 'It's all wrong. The description of the artwork, the architecture, the documents in this church […] the secret rituals – I don't know, because we never had any secret rituals in the church.'"

The film embellished the story to create a strong commercial product rather than a faithful cultural reservoir of the cultural heritage of the film's location. Even Bollywood, the Indian film industry, which relies on copying Hollywood, justifies its commercialization of filmmaking. According to Shah[24], an Indian filmmaker, when accused of copying Hollywood retorted:

> "It's only entertainment, for God's sake, not some high art to be worshipped with incense sticks and hymns. *Films aren't about creativity, originality or vision.* They are about entertaining audiences across the board. (including emphasis)."

22. Interview with Ali Nuhu, *Annashuwa*, December 2002, p. 31.
23. R. Tzanelli, «Cultural Intimations and the Commodification of Culture: Sign Industries as Makers of the Public Sphere», *The Global Studies Journal*, vol. 1, n° 3, 2008, p. 1.
24. A. Shah, «Is Bollywood Unlawfully Copying Hollywood? Why? What Has Been Done about it? And how Can it Be Stopped?», *Emory International Law Review*, vol. 26, n° 1, 2012, p. 461.

This mirrors the Hausa youth cinema (which is targeted at audiences from pre-teens to the early twenties). Let us first look at the defining characteristics of commercial Hindi films. According to Ravi Vasudevan, the negative features of commercial Hindi cinema are:

> "a tendency to stasis at the level of narrative and character development; an emphasis on externality, whether of action or character representation, melodramatic (florid, excessive), sentimentality; crude or naive plot mechanisms such as coincidence, narrative dispersion through arbitrary performance sequences, and unrestrained and over-emotive acting styles[25]".

Most Hindi films can be classified as musicals, especially due to their reliance on a heavy dose of song and dance sequences, blended with melodramatic storylines that employ formulaic ingredients such as star-crossed lovers and angry parents, love triangles, corrupt politicians, kidnappers, conniving villains, courtesans with hearts of gold, long-lost relatives and siblings separated by fate, dramatic reversals of fortune and convenient coincidences.

The Hindi persona of Hausa video films only began to emerge in 2000. Early Hausa film production started conventionally, with 15 films shot on celluloid from 1952 to 1995. They were *Baban Larai* (1952), *Mama Learnt a Lesson* (1960), *Back to Land (1970), Child Bride* (1970), *Kanta of Kebbi* (1976), *Shehu Umar* (1976), *Idon Matambayi* (1982), *Ga Fili Ga Doki* (1985), *Maitatsine* (1985), *Kulɓa Na Barna* (1993) and *Kasarmu Ce* (1995). *Nur Al-Zaman* (1993), which was filmed on a Betacam, was a biopic of the 19th century Hausa and Muslim reformer Shehu Usman Ɗanfodiyo and was never released. Others, of uncertain date, include *Ruwan Bagaja*, *An Kashe Maciji* and *Musa Yazo Birni*.

Following the typical style of traditional Hausa storytelling, these films were didactic and linear, and were either steeped in history (*Shehu Umar*), patriotism and nationhood (*Kasar Mu Ce*), or biopics (*Kanta of Kebbi*, *Maitatsine* and *Nur al-Zaman*) or about social services (*Baban Larai*, *Child Bride*) or else produced commercially by large companies to promote their products, as was the case with *Musa Ya Zo Birni*, which was produced by the Nigerian Tobacco Company to encourage production of the tobacco plant. These films were either produced at the time of limited media globalization or were studied attempts at cultural preservation through the mass media. They were also clearly expensive to make – having been produced on celluloid or Betacam, compared with contemporary digital video formats – and could not have been sustainable at an individual filmmaker level. For instance,

25. R. S. Vasudevan, «Shifting Codes, Dissolving Identities: The Hindi Social Film of the 1950s as Popular Culture», *in* R. S. Vasudevan (dir.), *Making Meaning in Indian Cinema*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 101.

Maitatsine, a 1983 biopic about a violent and bloody 1980s Muslim preacher with a large following who wanted to establish an Islamic State in Kano long before the Sharīʿah became part of Nigeria's political narrative, was not officially released in any medium after its theater showings because the producer was worried about piracy26. This all changed, especially with the availability of the Panasonic MS4 Camcorder, which afforded young Hausa filmmakers the opportunity to create a video film industry that they labeled Kanywood in 1999 (rather than the more common term Kannywood, which started being used in media outlets in 2000), a couple of years before Onishi coined "Nollywood" for the English language Nigerian video film industry in an article in the *New York Times*[27].

The first commercially available Hausa video film using this new technology was *Turmin Danya*. It was produced by Tumbin Giwa Film Productions in Kano, a drama group made up of film enthusiasts who appeared in local TV soap operas and decided to club their funds together and produce a full-feature Hausa film. When they finished editing the video in 1990, they faced the problem of marketing it. The production of the film did not come with an embedded film marketing strategy that would be cost-effective for the drama group, considering the financial hurdles they had had to overcome to produce just one film on video. In addition, Kano's cassette dealers, who are dominated by Hausa immigrants from the neighboring Republic of Niger, were not enthusiastic about the idea of marketing a Hausa video film over the Hindi, American and Chinese films they were doing a bustling trade in through pirating. A Hausa video film was an anomaly, because the main television stations, NTA Kano and CTV Kano, as well as NTA Kaduna, all showed easily available popular Hausa dramas. Further, it would not be possible to pirate it as easily as foreign films because the owners were local, and would be able to control production and distribution. In the face of the popularity of TV dramas and their ready availability, it did not seem to make marketing sense to accept *Turmin Danya*. The sellers therefore refused to accept it, or in the isolated cases in which they did stock it, they refused to promote it. While *Turmin Danya* is a typical love story, it is also a powerful reflection of the trials and tribulations of forced marriage, which is a source of great concern to Hausa youth, especially women. To all intents and purposes, therefore, it is a cultural – if subversive – statement about the predicament of forced marriage. It is artistic in the sense that it draws attention to a topic everyone has been avoiding and refuses to discuss in the public sphere. Girls married

26. A. A. Gidan Dabino, « Gwamnati ce ta hana fitar da fim din Maitatsine [It was the Government that prevented the release of *Maitatsine* film] », Mumtaz magazine, Kano (defunct), April 2001, p. 17.
27. N. Onishi, « Step Aside, L.A. and Bombay, for Nollywood », *The New York Times*, Sept. 16, 2002.

off by force are expected to accept their fate and get used to it, spending the rest of their lives in misery.

The Tumbin Giwa drama group also faced the second problem of acquiring enough blank tapes to make multiple copies of the video, and the marketers, who were the main distributors of the tapes, again refused to co-operate, as they did not wish to reveal their sources. Most of these marketers lack a formal education or the sophistication to market a film within the conventional film marketing process. This is mostly because in the creation and implementation of advertising and promotional efforts designed to make a film stand out in a competitive market environment, film marketing typically uses the same methods as other products, and these require a modern marketing structure that is unfamiliar to typical Hausa merchants, who usually rely mainly on selling commodities they have acquired from various sources rather than producing them. The marketers did, however, agree to distribute *Turmin Danya* if the producers could find enough tapes to duplicate it themselves and take it to them "ready-made". Thus the marketing system depended on the producer making multiple copies of a video film at his own expense, sticking the photo of a scene from the film on the cover and finding a willing marketer willing to accept it on a sale-or-return basis. If the video flopped due to low sales, the producer took the loss. Even if the marketer accepted the tapes, it could take up to six months for the full cost of a video film to be recouped, and even then it would be in dribs and drabs of at most ₦2,000 (in 1990, $1 = ₦7.39, or ₦10.70 at the black market rate) at a time. This tied up the producer, who had to wait until all the money had been collected before starting a new production. If a newer, more popular video film came along, the unsold tapes were returned to him.

It was in this uncertain way that marketing of the Hausa video film industry started, with no actual marketing – especially advertising, promotion, reviewing and product endorsement – or effective distribution network. It was up to the producers to take copies of tapes to the various marketers in the large northern cities of Kaduna, Sokoto, Jos, Zaria, Bauchi, Maiduguri and Gombe. The funds needed for this logistical process were simply too much for early producers, and therefore not feasible. It was for this reason, in fact, that early Hausa video films were produced by theatrical drama associations such as Jan Zaki, Jigon Hausa and Tumbin Giwa, all of which were based in Kano, who used the umbrella of their organizations to produce and distribute video films. Producers had to settle for a simple advertisement on the radio informing listeners where they could obtain a certain release.

However, when Tumbin Giwa released *Gimbiya Fatima* in 1992, it was a wake-up call for viewers and marketers. The film opened viewers' eyes to the genre, and after a slow start, Hausa video films had arrived. *Gimbiya*

Fatima, a period romantic drama in a traditional Hausa Muslim palace, caught viewers' imagination and proved so successful that the producers introduced an innovation into Hausa video filmmaking by making parts 2 and 3. It was the first Hausa video film to benefit from a continuing story.

For the producers, the only way to get their master copies mass duplicated was to make a deal with the marketers – the merchants who buy and sell video films and other consumer electronics. The release of *Tsuntsu Mai Wayo* in 1993 created a pathway for this collaboration. Instead of the customary picture of a scene from the video on the cover of the cassette, its cover was as near to being a professional quality color image as was possible at the time. Plate one shows cassette covers of two early videos.

It was the first Hausa video film with a "ready-made jacket": the slipcase container for the videotape was the "jacket". A few months later, Jigon Hausa Drama Club released *Munkar*, and created a new marketing strategy in which the Club (the "studio", as it were) gave a master copy of the film to a marketer, and then sold the marketer the number of "jackets" he needed, initially at ₦30 ($1.00 was ₦9.91 in 1992), and later ₦50 per jacket. The cassette dealer then took responsibility for duplicating copies of the master tape (on the same tapes he had refused to sell to the producers), placing them in the jackets and selling them to individual buyers at ₦250, or to re-sellers at ₦180. The ₦50 cost of the jackets was all the producer made out of this deal, and even then, he was paid *after* the dealer had sold the tapes. The jackets of unsold tapes were returned to the producer, and the cassette dealer simply erased the tape and recorded another video on it. The actors also received no subsequent royalties on the sales of the video, having been paid a lump sum by the producer before shooting began.

By the time Gidan Dabino released *In Da So Da Kauna* in 1996, the marketers had begun to show a slight interest in marketing Hausa video films. This was all the more so in this case because the film was based on the best-selling novel of the same name by the director and had caught the imagination of Hausa schoolgirls across northern Nigeria, as it was about a poor boy who falls in love with a girl whose rich parents opposed the relationship. A way still needed to be worked out how to mass produce the tapes, which the producers could not afford. Gidan Dabino came up with another formula: selling the "copyright" to the video film (the right to duplicate it) for either a year for ₦2,000 or "for life" for ₦5,000 (by 1996, $1 = ₦21.8). This arrangement was specific to a particular marketer, however, and as many as five different marketers could all come and lease (for this is what it actually entailed) a copy of the video film, duplicate it themselves and distribute it as they saw fit. The creative copyright in the video film, however, remained with Gidan Dabino. This system was not adopted by other producers, however, and the

original formula suggested by Jigon Hausa seemed to remain acceptable to the marketers.

The search for fame and contracts as producers led to the break-up of the drama clubs, and the Hausa video film industry opened up to all comers. In around 1995, for instance, Alhaji Musa Na Sale, who actually made recordings on audiocassettes (he recorded traditional Hausa musicians such as Sani Sabulu, Ali Makaho, and Garba Supa) came across the Hamdala Drama Group in Wudil, a town some 50 kilometers from Kano, during a stage performance. The group featured a comedian called Rabilu Musa Ɗanlasan, who worked under the stage name of Ibro. In a genre-defining business deal, Musa Na Sale paid for the video production of a comedy by the group, featuring Ibro in his first film. The film was *Kowa Ya Ɗebo Da Zafi*, and it made history in Hausa popular culture in two respects: first, it was the first commercial Hausa video film made by a marketer; and second, it established the *Chamama* category of Hausa video films – cheaply produced films that were often completed in less than a week from the first shot to the finished output – which served as an attraction to other marketers. In this way, certain marketers also became producers after 1995.

Marketing Hausa Video Films

The early Hausa video films (1990 to 1996) had a distinctive feature: they were written mainly by novelists and produced by structured drama groups and clubs. They were thus artistic in the sense that they were genuine attempts at interpreting society using a new media technology that was just becoming available to young urban Hausa. For instance, *Turmin Danya* was a period drama on intrigues in a traditional Hausa ruler's palace. Munkar was written by a Hausa novelist and screenwriter, who approached the film with some degree of professionalism. It also contained a powerful social message, seeking to stamp out prostitution among young Hausa girls. In *Da So Da Kauna* explored the essential tensions between tradition and choice in marriage by tracing the roots of the forced marriage phenomena in one family. Ki Yarda Da Ni was a study of the *kishiya*, or "co-wife", micro-culture in Hausa marriages. It was adapted from a book by a best-selling female author.

Subsequent producers, however, were not novelists, but rather experienced stage and drama artists who maintained the tradition of producing their video dramas on tape and marketing them to an audience that was beginning to be aware of the new popular culture. More producers emerged within a relatively short period of time, particularly between 1995 and 1999. The initial route into the industry was for a new producer to give a "contract"

to an established producer to make a film for him – or quite often her – and to become involved in every aspect of production. Once the newcomer had learned the ropes, he too became a producer, and often a director, not so much in order to have budgetary control over the production, but to be a part of the industry. Furthermore, in the early stages, individuals who had the capital to form some sort of production company had no problem in becoming market leaders.

It was clear, however, that some form of organized conduct was needed in order to either negotiate the best deals or undercut a rival, and thus a group of senior producers temporarily set aside their mutual hostility and decided to form the Kano State Filmmakers Association (KSFMA) in 1996 to provide a common platform for the video film industry, regulate entry into the system and, most importantly, provide some form of input into the marketing of video films. However, the KSFMA was doomed to failure right from its formation because of personality clashes among its members and the utter contempt shown towards the leadership of the association by emerging, and significantly younger, producers. As one of the founding members noted,

> "Soon, selfish interests, domination phobia, conspiracy and jealousy started to show their ugly faces. The noble aims and objectives of the association were put into jeopardy. Unethical practices, lawlessness and dislike for control coupled with the blind desire to make money at all costs (because others had done so) became the order of the day[28]."

Despite its members' many combined years of theater and TV production experience, no attempt was made by the KSFMA to professionalize the industry in terms of either training, industry focus, expanding the market beyond Hausa-speaking areas or post-production processes. There were also no quality assurance mechanisms to regulate production ethics or storylines. As Jibril noted,

> "Indeed, most of the personnel that make up a typical production crew (director, producer, camera operators, lighting technicians, soundmen, production designers, etc.), normally started out without any formal training in either their acclaimed areas of expertise or in the general principles and techniques of film and video production. The few people among them who had had a formal education and training in television or film production were forced to compromise the essential professional production requirements and treatments in technical areas (like directing, scripting, visual treatments, effects,

28. B. S. Mohammed, « The Role of Nongovernmental Organizations in the Development of Hausa Film Industry in Kano », *in* A. U. Adamu, Y. M. Adamu et U. F. Jibril (dir.), *Hausa Home Videos: Technology, Economy and Society*, Kano, Center for Hausa Cultural Studies, 2004, p. 74.

lighting requirements, make-up and sound) in favor of the common practice of 'doing it the way others do', and not necessarily how it ought to be done professionally[29]."

By the end of 2003, independent marketers, who were not associated with any drama club or filmmakers' association, had simply taken over the Hausa video film industry, successfully edging out many of the mainstream Hausa video filmmakers in Kanywood's nerve center. With video films from these newly-established independents swamping the market, it became difficult to recoup enough money from one film to make another, especially for those who wished to maintain a semblance of creativity in their films. This became inevitable because, as Jonathan Haynes has pointed out:

"The basic structures of the video business are similar in Nigeria and Ghana. The marketers/distributors based in Opera Square in Accra and in Idumota Market in Lagos, with other Nigerian centers in the Igbo cities of Onitsha and Aba and the Hausa city of Kano, have effective control of the market. They are the main source of capital, as banks and other formal sector institutions are wary of the film business. Most of the marketers were traders in electronics or other goods before getting into the film business; they are vigorously condemned by the filmmakers as semi-literates with no knowledge of cinema, throwing their weight around like the Hollywood moguls of old but without the far-sightedness or instinct for talent that built the American industry. They are resented for mandating storylines and casting and held responsible for the repetitious flogging of the same faces and plots, aiming only at quick returns on minimal investments by pandering to the lowest and most predictable tastes of their audiences[30]."

Subsequently, Hausa video film marketers, who rejected the infant industry and, like their southern Nigerian counterparts, had no background or training in any form of the cinematic arts, adopted two strategies for taking over the Hausa video film market from 2003.

Purchase of CD Rights

The first was the introduction of the "sayen CD": the purchase of CD rights in a film by a one-off payment. The purchase of CD rights had begun with *Tawakkali* in 2001 at a time when southern Nigerian films were becoming increasingly available in CDs manufactured by media production companies such as Sontec in Singapore. This created a stampede of interest among Hausa

29. U. F. Jibril, « Small Technologies: Changing Trends in Hausa Home Video Production », *in* A. U. Adamu *et al.*, *Hausa Home Videos…*, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
30. J. Haynes, « Video Boom: Nigeria and Ghana », *Postcolonial Text*, vol. 3, n° 2, 2007, p. 40.

video filmmakers to transfer their own films on to CDs, which were seen as the ultimate symbol of cinematic cool. This created a brisk business for Iyke Moore Enterprises, which was the main marketer of Nigerian language, and especially Igbo, films in Kano, and purchased the CD rights to many Hausa video films at ₦20,000 per film. However, the Hausa marketers, who had not shown any interest in marketing Hausa films on CDs, preferring to stick to the old formula of buying "jackets" from the producers, suddenly realized that greater profits could be made from CDs than from VHS tapes and moved in, effectively undercutting Iyke Moore and purchasing Hausa video films at significantly higher prices from local producers, while at the same time exploiting the ethnic factor for their own benefit: for instance, while Iyke Moore was an Igbo, the Nigerian Hausa marketers noted their ethnic affinity with the Hausa film producers and used it as a negotiating tool, effectively edging Iyke Moore out of the business completely. Since the production costs were cheaper with CDs than with VHS tapes, sales from the latter were left as sheer profit for the producers.

The purchasing appeal of CD rights to a film, especially from 2003, hinged on trailers that focused on a song and dance routine with catchy tunes and girls in skimpy dresses (for example, *Rukuni*, *Numfashi* and *Guda*). These trailers were then shown to the merchants, who purchased the CD rights to the film before it had been shot (and often before the script had even been written). With CD rights costing between ₦350,000 and ₦500,000 (depending on how flashy the film was, and not its storyline, which came in third place after the songs and dancing, and in second place after its stars), the producers suddenly had enough cash to continue with the production of more titles with the cash backing from the CD rights as well as the profits from the few cinema ticket sales and VHS tapes of the film.

Financing of the Industry

2004 saw the second stage of dealers taking over the industry, and they became the major funders of Hausa video films by sponsoring the kind of market-driven films that could be sold through their networks, often at the expense of independent productions. Table 1 shows the trend of control over the Hausa video film market in seven sampled years, based on fieldwork data in Kano in the period.

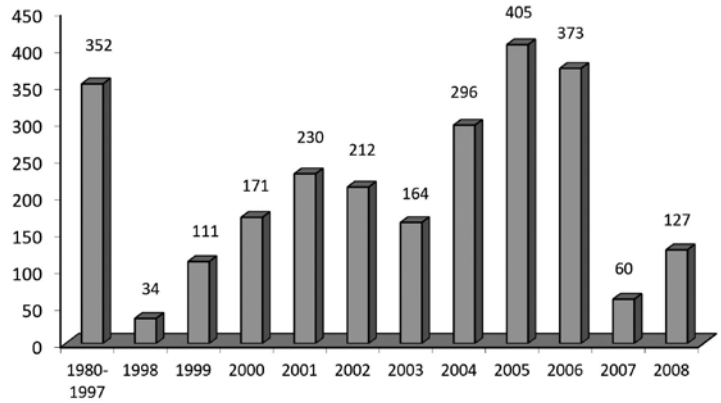
Table 1. Financing Control of Hausa Video Films, 1998-2004

Year	Video Releases	Marketer-owned	
		Number	Percentage
1998	33	10	30
1999	111	22	20
2000	171	51	30
2001	230	71	30
2002	212	63	30
2003	164	35	21
2004	293	136	46

Source: Figures provided by the Marketer's Association, Kano, 2008, unpublished.

In all these years, an estimated 32% of Hausa video films were financed by cassette dealers whose motive – perhaps understandably – seemed to be profit rather than preservation of culture in the medium of film. Indeed, so total was their stranglehold on the industry that by 2005 they controlled the entire process, from scripting to post-production through sponsorship of the type of films guaranteed to garner maximum sales. Thus, the sudden upsurge of the production of video films in 2005 was attributed not to the individual studios, but to the cassette dealers' cartel, which simply took over the industry. This surge is illustrated in figure 1.

Figure 1. Upsurge in Hausa Video Film Production



Source: Field data from the archives of the Kano State Censorship Board, 2010. The 1980-1997 figures were obtained from claims made in interviews with Hausa video film producers in Hausa magazines, specifically *Fim*, *Taurarwa*, *Garkuwa* and *Nishadi*.

Of the estimated 1,961 Hausa video films produced from 1980 to 2005, however, only about 1,609 were officially recorded by the National Film and Video Censorship Board (1998-2003 figures), which began censoring the Hausa films submitted to it in 1996, and the Kano State Censorship Board (2004 and 2005 figures). Between 1980 and 1996, a total of 352 Hausa video films were claimed to have been produced, although many were not recorded anywhere except by the producers, who announced their production in interviews in Hausa popular culture magazines such as *Fim, Tauraruwa*, *Nishadī* and *Garkuwa*. However, the popularity of the genre is reflected by the fact that in 2005 alone a total of 394 video films were released, eclipsing the 352 produced in the 16 years from 1980 to 1996. Also, despite censorship, which imposed certain regulations, the two years from 2000 to 2001 saw a total of 20.4% of Hausa video films. The biggest boom, however, was in 2005, when 20% of the total number of Hausa video films were produced in one year alone.

Massively successful video films such as *Sangaya* in 2000 led to an avalanche of new films, as reflected in the 14.2% total share of officially censored video films in 2001, a significant increase over previous years. Further, according to the National Film and Video Censorship Board (2002) there were a total of 121 officially recognized Hausa film producers in Nigeria in 2001, and 23 directors (who, at least in Kano, constituted themselves into the Directors' Guild of Kano, the DGK). However, data from the associations in Kano themselves show that the Kano State Filmmakers Association had 218 members in 2005. The Kano State Guild of Artists also recorded a total of 505 members. However, it emerges from fieldwork studies in Kano and Kaduna – the largest production centers – that most of these production companies did not even have an office, and there were no specific studios. Filmmakers often relied on rented equipment to shoot a film and took the rushes to an editing studio, many of which were converted business computer centers.

The decline from 2007 was caused by a scandal involving a high-profile female Hausa video film star, Maryam "Hiyana" Usman, whose cellphone video clip of a sexual encounter with a boyfriend in 2007 led to a public crisis of confidence in Hausa video films, and caused a significant slump in sales.

Alternative forms of financing became inevitable because the major production studios lacked the capital to sustain themselves after the market crashed in 2003 due to stricter implementation of censorship regulations in 2001 following the re-establishment of Shari'a in 2000, first in Kano, and then in other predominantly Muslim states in northern Nigeria. Seeing an opportunity to cash in, the marketers pumped cash backing into the studios, on the condition that the productions would be purely commercial. Studio heads with the capital to compete had to ensure that they produced the same type of films.

Since the Hausa video film marketers were not in the market for the sake of "art", criticisms of their marketing strategies, or even the films, especially from participants at the first international conference on Hausa films in 2003[31], did not affect the fact that the films were disposable commodities in Hausa cultural trade.

Movie Stars as the Nouveau Riche

The massive injection of cash, the popularity of Hausa video films and the emerging stars created a Kanywood appeal that attracted more young independent producers, and the period from about 1999 to 2003 might be considered to be the golden age of Hausa popular visual culture. Since the industry was not professionalized, however, it had none of the specific standards that applied to the film industry the world over. It became a cut-throat world, with every producer keeping their stories (or the Hindi film they were about to rip off) close to their chests for fear of being beaten to the market. Rivalry and intense competition in a restricted market became the norm, with studio heads often at loggerheads due to conflicts of interest (with stars, storylines or marketing) or personality clashes, each claiming superiority on his own turf like in a gangland war. It was for this reason that producers-cum-directors-cum-actors whose videos were bankable became sought after by financiers.

On commercial terms, the new stars were not really making a great deal of money. Most appeared in video films for popularity and fame rather than fortune, and because they lacked an organized basis for negotiating – there were no casting agents in the system – they were paid according to the whims of the producers. From 1994 to 1996, for instance, the fees paid to artists were at the sole discretion of the producer. Indeed, in most early video films, the artists appeared free, and were adequately compensated by their rising profiles and popularity as video film stars ("yan fim"). The first Hausa video film that involved signed contracts with the artists and paid them fees – thus setting the tone for the rest of the industry to follow, albeit reluctantly – was RK Studio's *Badakala* in 1996 ($1 = ₦21.89; ₦84.58 at the black market rate). The total cost of producing the film was ₦250,000 (which was less than $3,000). The leading artists in the video were paid between ₦7,000 ($82) and ₦10,000 ($118), a considerable fortune at the time.

31. A. U. Adamu *et al.*, *Hausa Home Videos…*, *op. cit.*

Around the end of 1998 and early 1999, the average payment was about N500 per scene, and by the end of 1998 it had started climbing to ₦2,000, depending on the actor's commercial appeal. In 1998, for instance, a female lead in *Karshen Makirci* was paid ₦5,000, whereas the following year, the main female character in *Alhaki* was paid ₦20,000, reflecting the rising profiles of certain stars. From 1999 on, the fees stabilized, and until early 2002, actors with "megastar status" in a leading role received between ₦20,000 and a maximum of ₦40,000 per film. During the same period, these same "superstar" artists were paid between one and two thousand naira per scene, depending on their relationship with the producer. After the market became unstable in 2005, sales could no longer be guaranteed, and fees started coming down to ₦10,000 from ₦40,000 for a "superstar" video film star. The stars were at the mercy of producers because the concept of negotiating a contract through an agent was never thought to be part of the process.

By 2017, however, fees had gone up again. A "superstar" at that time was commanding ₦500,000 ($1= ₦360) for appearing in a film of two or more parts – in reality one single film split into multiple parts in order to recover as many of the costs as possible. Actors who were not categorized as "superstars" earned about ₦50,000 for each "difficult" film (one demanding either a great deal of physical exertion or extreme skillsets).

Production Costs and the Decline of Hausa Video Films

The cost of production of Hausa video films followed the vagaries of the economy, as is the case with all aspects of economic life. Dandago and Imam[32] sampled about 13 studios in Kano and Kaduna State to determine the average cost of production of a Hausa video film based on a specific genre. The results are indicated in Table 2, juxtaposed with 2017 production costs.

The increases reflect what audiences consider to be "trending". A film star with a large Instagram following is likely to attract larger audiences to a new film than a fading star, or one with no Instagram account. The least popular category is family films revolving around family conflicts based on a formulaic narrative structure of love conflicts between co-wives, which bores audiences. They are also relatively cheaper to make, since in most cases they are "talking head" films, with only scene changes to give variation to the dialogue.

32. K. I. Dandago et M. I. Imam, « Investment Viability in the Hausa Film Industry: An Empirical Study », *in* A. U. Adamu *et al.*, *Hausa Home Videos…*, *op. cit.*

Table 2. The average cost of Hausa video film production (₦)

S/N	Type of film	Average Cost (₦)	
		2002	**2017**
	Comedies	400,000	2,000,000
	Love stories	500, 000	2,500,000
	Religious films	600, 000	1,500,000
	Children's films	600, 000	3,000,000
	Action films	700,000	4,000,000
	Horror films	1,000, 000	4,000,000
	Social films	1,200,000	3,000,000
	Family films	1,500, 000	1,000,000
	Traditional films	2,000,000	5,000,000

Source: Updated with additional 2019 fieldwork, after K. I. Dandago et M. I. Imam, « Investment Viability in the Hausa Film Industry: An Empirical Study », *in* A. U. Adamu, Y. M. Adamu et U. F. Jibril (dir.), *Hausa Home Videos: Technology, Economy and Society*, Kano, Center for Hausa Cultural Studies, 2004, p. 206-220.

Generally, however, the fluctuating economy, as well as introduction of more costly filmmaking equipment (from VHS camcorders to digital cameras) as well as the higher cost of actors and post-production costs were responsible for almost doubling fees over the 15-year period. A series of factors led to the decline of the industry.

Firstly, the Hausa film industry had literally crashed by 2016 even as production costs increased, as indicated in Table 2. The frequency of new releases declined because of reduced patronage due to alternative – often free – sources. International satellite channels such as the Indian Zee World, especially their English-dubbed TV series, caught the attention of urban Hausa more than the recycled Hindi film clones that were the hallmark of Hausa video films. The major marketers-cum-producers had all pulled out of the industry. Hausa megastar actors took to advertising noodles, milk and other household commodities – often traveling from house to house with product marketers – relying on their faces and voices (and making sure they introduced themselves in all the commercials) to sell to an increasingly hungry population caught up in the vortex of economic depression. Other producers and superstar actors took to farming. There were many reasons behind the crash.

Secondly, the popular cultural industries in Kano were marketed into market hubs. The Bata market at the edge of Sabon Gari controlled sales of the predominantly foreign films and music and was the main distribution center for other parts of Nigeria and Africa, where a sizeable market existed in Niger, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Togo, Cameroon, Chad and the Congos. When Hausa video films arrived in 1990, they found a ready template to attach themselves to. The other market was Kasuwar Ƙofar Wambai (the Ƙofar Wambai market), which is located just by the walls of Kano city, near a cluster of old colonial cinemas. The Wambai market focuses mainly on leather, textile and plastics, but it was also the hub of audiotape sales, with marketers doing brisk business pirating old EMI, Polydor and HMV tapes of ethnographic recordings of traditional Hausa musicians recorded in the 1950s and after. Road construction work at Bata in about 2003 created unfavorable conditions for many stall owners, and some decided to shift to the Wambai market. By 2005, the entire video film market had moved to Wambai, which became the new Bata.

The Wambai market, which had hitherto been occupied by cassette dealers who ignored the Hausa film industry, suddenly became a virgin territory for film marketers and producers, and they all opened a stall there. It reached its peak in less than five years, after which it crashed due to the massive congestion of producers and marketers, all of whom were selling the same thing. When I visited the market in May 2017, I counted fewer than ten stalls selling videos or audiotapes, compared with some five years earlier, when it had been bursting at the seams with these products. The stalls have now been taken over by stocks of cheap blouses, football jerseys and cloned smartphone accessories, all from China.

The arrival of satellite TV station Arewa24 in 2014 was therefore merely another nail in the coffin of the Hausa video film market. Transnational in its outlook, its TV series provide a level of script sophistication unheard of in the Hausa film industry. Other satellite TV stations such as StarTimes and the Hausa Channels on Africa Magic DStv, including GoTV, became increasingly affordable, with easy monthly payments for preferred stations. Showing a massive amount of Hausa films, they eclipsed CD and DVD purchases. Audiences prefer to watch the films on these services than to go through the trouble of purchasing DVDs that often do not work and require DVD players, most of which are Chinese knock-offs of international brands that often turn out to be defective and not to work.

The satellite TV stations employ a simple formula of using an agent to purchase the "rights" to a video film at a one-off cost of between $1,000 and $3,000 for films with English subtitles, depending on the popularity of the film and its actors. Films without subtitles are purchased at the whim

of the agent, who then pays between ₦5,000 and ₦10,000 to do the subtitling. In 2018, following the success of the Dadïn Kowa series on Arewa24, Hausa filmmakers started experimenting with creating TV series at an average cost of ₦5 million.

The fourth reason is the Internet, which has made the biggest contribution to the decline in production of Hausa video films. With Nigerian telecommunication companies competing for customers and subsequently undercutting each other in the provision of data plans, Hausa youth have more access to social media sites such as Instagram and YouTube. The latter in particular has provided them with opportunities to upload hundreds of Hausa films for everyone to see. While this has increased the visibility of Hausa films worldwide, popularity does not translate to a return on investment, as most of the films have been uploaded on to YouTube illegally.

The fifth cause is the proliferation of download centers in northern Nigeria, with the largest groups in Kano. Figure 2 shows samples of downloaders in Kano.

Figure 2. Ibrahim and Anas downloading Hausa films and transferring them from hard drives to smartphones.

Source: Salisu "Lulu" Kabiru Aliyu, Kano, 2019.

Table 3. Sample Downloader Trade in Hausa Films, 2018 ($1 = ₦360)

S/N	Title	Bought	Sold
1.	Ƙarshen Wata Ruga	150,000	270,000
2.	Hangen Dala (3 & 4)	130,000	180,000
3.	Dogon Buri	120,000	145,000
4.	Korarriya (Cigaban Ankon Biki)	100,000	240,000
5.	Barister Surayya	100,000	250,000
6.	Safnah	60,000	230,000
7.	Bayan Fage	60,000	160,000
8.	Marayu	55,000	115,000
9.	Ƙuru Ƙuru	50,000	70,000
10.	Matata Ce Shaida I	40,000	110,000
	Total	**865,000**	**1,770,000**

Source: Salisu "Lulu" Kabiru Aliyu, Director of Operations, Film Image, Kano 2019.

The operators of these centers take films from CDs and DVDs of Hausa films and convert them into the 3GP video format, and make them available to their customers at ₦50 per film, with discounts offered for volume purchases. A 1GB MicroSD card can hold as many as 20 films. The 3GP format makes it possible for people to watch films on even the cheapest smartphone, which readily and rapidly replaced DVD players, which require a TV and electricity, something that is not always guaranteed in Nigeria. Often, the downloaders "lease" the films from street vendors – children who hawk CDs and DVDs at traffic lights – for ₦100 per film, rip them and return them to the hawkers who simply put them back into their pristine cellophane wrappers and eventually sell them, thus making a dual profit. Both the various associations of Hausa filmmakers and the Kano State Government's Censorship Board have tried to stamp out the downloaders, but without success; they have become so powerful and well-organized that they have even formed various associations themselves. The punishment is usually to arrest them, fine them and order them to delete the illegally ripped films from their computers. These measures proved so ineffective that a deal was worked out in 2017 between the filmmakers and the downloaders to "officially" lease the films to the downloaders for a fee in the form of a "legal license". Data from a "download distributor" in Kano obtained in 2018 and captured in Table 3 show the fees paid by the downloaders and the money they made out of a sample of 10 films.

It is clear, therefore, that Hausa film production did not completely cease, but lost its luster, commercial power and appeal after 2015.

Finally, those actors who were lucky enough to be accepted early enough during the film industry's existence came to dominate the system. This was actually imposed by the marketers, who insisted on particular actors appearing in a film they would either sponsor or market because they were more bankable and guaranteed quick sales for their films. With this economic strength behind them, very few (perhaps fewer than five) came to dominate almost every "big" budget Hausa film. By 2017, however, their stars had begun to fade, as audiences tired of seeing them appearing in virtually identical films with different names, and the marketers dropped them. Although they still made films, they diversified their faces and voices into commercials for major telephone service providers and essential commodities such as chicken noodles and milk and soup seasoning.

The fading of the megastars' fortunes became evident with the ascendency and rise to popularity of the relatively unknown stars of a TV series, *Dadin Kowa*, which debuted on Arewa24 satellite TV on 21 January 2015. *Dadin Kowa* is an imaginary town that serves as a melting pot of Nigerians from various ethnicities and religions, who nonetheless live peacefully. In 2016, it won Africa Magic Awards over *Sarki Jatau*, an expensive, lavish traditionally cultural Hausa period drama.

In this paper I have attempted to draw attention to the boundaries between the commodification of culture in the form of commercialization and the preservation of culture as defined by immortalizing performances, food, practices, rituals, clothing, birth and death practices, family structures, etc., all of which distinguish one particular group from others as a unique cultural entity through media and creative industries. I argue that Hausa culture – with its norms, values, beliefs and expressive symbols[33] – had an opportunity to be aesthetically preserved in the medium, but was commercialized on the altar of profit by filmmakers, producing what is essentially a mishmash of a parody of a Hausa culture that represents or preserves Hausa culture.

Cultural commodities are marketed with assumptions of their impact on the daily lives of their consumers. Marketing determines the success of media industries in particular, often with disregard for content. The commodification of the Hausa popular cultural industries was predicated on a profit motive,

33. R. A. Peterson, 1979, «Revitalizing the Culture Concept», *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 5, p. 137-166.

and not on art or aesthetics, and financiers were ready to continue investing in the industries as long as they could make real profits. It is this profit motive that commoditizes art and elegance into a common supermarket product with a short shelf life.

Governments can provide support for archiving culture and thus reduce its commodification, but at the expense of doctrine, as they choose what to support and what to discard in line with their ideology. This compromises art, and denies artists the freedom to preserve their cultural heritage if they are obliged to follow a particular state ideology in order to obtain funding for their art. Either way, the artist is caught between government ideology and capitalist marketers, both of whom care not about his art and its cultural import, but about the benefit to themselves in terms of ideological entrenchment or profit, as the case may be.

There was no collaboration between banks and the film industry with regard to Hausa cultural industries, even in the case of the more sustainable and internationally successful Nollywood film industry. Haynes has noted that "the government's interest in Nollywood led to the establishment in 2010 of a $200 millions loan fund to support the entertainment industry[34]", but the bureaucracy attached to accessing the funds became excessive, and many filmmakers did not bother to apply. In addition, "banks make occasional personal loans to filmmakers who put up their houses as collateral, but no bank tried to establish a serious relationship with the film industry". It was only in 2007 that EcoBank came up with its Project Nollywood, but it was a failure. Even in Hollywood, the profit motive is a powerful incentive for attracting bankers and financiers to film as a commodity rather than an investment in art[35].

As this essay has demonstrated, filmmakers, producers and marketers alike were motivated by the commodification of culture rather than its preservation. Data from the broader fieldwork identify the chagrin expressed by Hausa filmmakers whenever reference was made to the cultural dysfunctionality of their films. Their arguments have always been that film is a business, not an art, which explains why they opted out of the "business" when it became no longer viable.

And yet art and artistry, first as expressions of creativity and imagination, and second as cultural practices, illuminate our inner lives and enrich our emotional world. They provide a map of our ethnographic journey through life and keep our ethnicities and identities fresh. Commodification trivializes

34. J. Haynes. *Nollywood: The Creation of Nigerian Film Genres*, Chicago/Ibadan, University of Chicago Press/Bookcraft, 2017, p. 48.
35. J. Wasko, « The Political Economy of the American Film Industry », art. cité.

this significance and robs us of the opportunity to preserve our creativity for future generations, which is something Renaissance artists, innovators and creators were able to do for humanity ■

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Résumé

L'économie politique du cinéma populaire hausa

La culture, mode d'expression artistique et ethnographique de la condition humaine, est bien représentée dans le cinéma, considéré ici comme un divertissement, mais aussi comme un moyen de préserver un patrimoine culturel. La production cinématographique a généralement un but lucratif mais, dans les cultures cinématographiques africaines, cela se fait souvent au détriment du potentiel artistique du patrimoine culturel. Cet article examine comment la production cinématographique haoussa dans le Nord du Nigeria est devenue une marchandise, aux dépens de la préservation culturelle et artistique du patrimoine culturel haoussa. À l'aide de données récoltées auprès de distributeurs de films à Kano, dans le Nord du Nigeria, il explore de manière historique comment les forces du marché déterminent l'avenir de la production de films dans la région.