

**THE RISE OF NOLLYWOOD
DISTRIBUTION, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

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Abstract

The Nollywood film industry is now the second largest film industry in the world based on films released, surpassed only by Bollywood. Based in Surulere, Lagos, Nigeria, Nollywood films are now distributed and watched worldwide. The dissemination of Nollywood films reflects choices about technology and distribution that have significantly influenced the economics of Nollywood productions. In the early 1990s, Nollywood films stopped being produced using film and began to be produced on digital video. The move to digital video was facilitated by the reduced cost of this form of production. In addition, Nollywood films are typically direct to video films that are not shown in theaters in Nigeria. The digital video production model was thus well suited to the Nigerian social and political context. This decision, however, had implications for the broader distribution of Nollywood films. The current Nigerian diaspora reflects the post-independence emigration of significant number of Nigerians to a variety of countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom. The distribution of such films has tracked the spread of the Nigerian and African diaspora. Nollywood films are watched by members of the Nigerian diaspora as well as African diasporic communities more broadly. Nollywood films are distributed worldwide in VCD format. In addition to reflecting the cultural geography of Nigeria, Nollywood films are predominant movies in Nigeria and other African countries and often reflect sociocultural values and concerns relevant in such contexts. As such, the distribution of Nollywood films has been facilitated by the fact that these films communicate effectively to members of the Nigerian and African diasporas. The distribution of Nollywood films, however, raises significant issues with respect to the distribution of unauthorized copies of such films, both in Nigeria and countries such as the U.S. Such unauthorized distribution reflects the implications of the Nollywood diasporic distribution model. It also potentially significantly reduces the economic returns received by those who participate in the development of Nollywood films. This paper will examine the implications of the diasporic distribution model for intellectual property and the economic returns to creators and authorized distributors of Nollywood films.