Evolving Hausa Cinema from Short Dramas to Serialised Storytelling in Post-Independence Nigeria

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Abstract. The transformation of Hausa-language cinema in Nigeria from short, stand-alone dramas to serialised storytelling represents a significant reconfiguration of regional media production. This study investigates how and why serial formats consolidated in Kannywood, focusing on the interaction between economic pressures, institutional structures, audience practices, and cultural norms in the post-independence period. Using a convergent mixed-methods design, the study combines a survey of 400 university students in Kano State, sixteen in-depth interviews with producers and directors, documentary analysis of broadcaster commissioning practices, and content analysis of selected pioneering serials. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were examined through reflexive thematic analysis, with triangulation applied to integrate findings across data sources. The findings indicate that serial production consolidated between 2012 and 2016, with accelerated growth after 2015 following the emergence of Hausa satellite broadcasters, particularly Arewa24. Audience data show strong support for serial formats, with 70.0% of respondents recognising their suitability for flexible viewing and advertising, 69.5% identifying producers as key industry drivers, and 91.0% acknowledging global media influence on narrative techniques. Interviews reveal that serialisation prompted organisational restructuring, including batch production, episodic scripting through writers' teams, and stabilised cast and crew arrangements. At the same time, producers face persistent risks related to financing continuity, piracy, censorship, and community acceptability. The study argues that serialisation in Hausa cinema constitutes a pragmatic industrial strategy rather than a purely aesthetic shift.

Keywords: Hausa cinema; Kannywood; serialised storytelling; media transformation; cultural production; Nigeria

1. Introduction

Film formats are not neutral containers of stories; they are institutionalised cultural forms that shape production routines, narrative organisation, labour relations, and

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audience engagement (Kovács, 2025; Liu et al., 2020; Silva Santana & Silva Santana, 2025; Stolk et al., 2025). In media and cultural industry studies, formats are understood as stabilised frameworks that enable repetition, scalability, and commercial circulation while maintaining narrative coherence and recognisability (Russo, 2025; Schatz, 2014). The transition from self-contained short dramas to long-form serialised storytelling therefore signals more than aesthetic change it indicates a structural transformation in how cultural production is organised, financed, and sustained. Serialisation, in particular, requires continuity of narrative, regularised production schedules, and long-term relationships with audiences, making it a key marker of industrial maturation within regional film industries.

International scholarship demonstrates that serialised storytelling has become a dominant narrative mode in contemporary screen cultures, driven by the expansion of broadcast television, cable networks, and streaming platforms since the 2010s. Studies of television and digital seriality highlight how episodic narratives foster sustained audience attachment through recurring characters, narrative delay, and cliff-hangers, thereby enhancing viewer loyalty and monetisation opportunities (Jenkins et al., 2018; Kozloff, 2016). Empirical research on viewing practices further indicates a global shift toward serial consumption and appointment viewing, particularly among younger audiences, reinforcing the economic and cultural viability of episodic formats (Rubenking & Bracken, 2021). These trends have been observed across both Global North and Global South media systems, albeit with locally specific adaptations.

Within African cinema, serialisation has increasingly emerged as a strategic response to technological change, platform expansion, and shifting audience behaviour (Bello, 2025; Guaraná, 2022; Higgins, 2015; Sawadogo, 2022; Tomaselli, 2021). In northern Nigeria, Hausa-language cinema, popularly known as Kannywood, historically relied on short, self-contained dramas and single-release home videos that emphasised moral instruction and cultural pedagogy (Adamu, 2025; Harrow & Garritano, 2018; Ibbi, 2015; M. M. Ibrahim, 2019). However, since the mid-2010s, the industry has experienced a notable rise in long-running serials such as Daɗin Kowa, Labarina, and Kwana Casa'in, distributed through satellite television and digital platforms. Scholars attribute this shift to the growth of Hausa-focused broadcasters, especially Arewa24, alongside emerging online distribution channels and sponsorship-driven production models (M. M. Ibrahim, 2019).

Existing studies suggest that serialisation in Kannywood has contributed to changes in production organisation, including more structured scripting processes, regularised shooting schedules, and the stabilisation of cast and crew contracts (M. Ibrahim, 2024). At the same time, serial formats have been identified as economically attractive in a context marked by pervasive piracy and declining revenues from single-title film releases (Lacalle & Simelio, 2019; Maskarinec, 2023). Audience-oriented research further indicates that younger viewers increasingly prefer episodic narratives due to their continuity, character development, and social-media-driven circulation (Truyens & Picone, 2024; Yan et al., 2024). Nevertheless, much of this literature treats serialisation as an outcome of industrial change rather than as a transformative process that reconfigures narrative form, labour structures, and cultural meaning.

Despite the growing body of scholarship on Kannywood, several gaps remain. First, there is limited systematic analysis of the transition from short drama formats to serialised storytelling that integrates textual, institutional, and audience perspectives. Second, prior studies tend to focus either on historical development or policy and

regulation, leaving the formal and organisational implications of serialisation under-theorised. Third, empirical research employing mixed methods to connect audience reception with producer decision-making and institutional commissioning remains scarce within Hausa film studies. As a result, the mechanisms through which serial formats reshape Kannywood's narrative grammar and industrial sustainability are not yet fully understood.

This study is significant both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, it contributes to media format studies and regional cinema scholarship by offering an empirically grounded account of serialisation within an African-language film industry, a context that remains underrepresented in global media research. Empirically, the study provides insight into how cultural specificity, moral frameworks, and economic pressures interact in shaping serialised storytelling practices. From a practical standpoint, the findings offer valuable implications for producers, broadcasters, and policymakers seeking to balance cultural continuity with industrial sustainability in Hausa cinema and comparable regional media industries.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine how Hausa cinema has evolved from short, self-contained dramas to extended serialised storytelling in post-independence Nigeria. Specifically, it seeks to: (1) identify the institutional, economic, and audience-related factors driving the adoption of serial formats; (2) analyse the resulting transformations in narrative structure and production organisation; and (3) assess the implications of serialisation for the long-term sustainability of the Kannywood film industry. By employing a mixed-methods approach, this research offers a comprehensive understanding of format transformation as both a cultural and industrial process within Hausa-language cinema.

2. Method

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods research design to examine the transformation of Hausa cinema from short dramas to serialised storytelling. The mixed-methods approach was chosen to capture both the breadth of audience perceptions and the depth of industrial and creative practices shaping format transformation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Robinson, 2007). Quantitative and qualitative data were collected in parallel and integrated at the interpretation stage to allow triangulation and corroboration of findings. This design is particularly appropriate for media industry research, where institutional dynamics, textual practices, and audience behaviours intersect.

The quantitative component consisted of a survey administered to 400 undergraduate students across five universities in Kano State, selected through stratified random sampling to reflect institutional diversity. The survey instrument measured viewing habits, perceptions of narrative formats, and attitudes toward serialised Hausa films using Likert-scale items. Descriptive statistics were used to identify dominant trends in audience preferences, while cross-tabulations were employed to examine patterns related to age and viewing frequency. Quantitative analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS, ensuring consistency and reliability in data handling (Lim, 2025; Slater & Hasson, 2025).

The qualitative component involved sixteen in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Hausa film producers and directors who had actively participated in serial production within the last decade (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Morgan, 2022). Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure relevance and industry experience.

Interviews explored decisions surrounding format choice, production organisation, commissioning relationships, and audience engagement. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analysed using reflexive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2021). Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings was achieved through convergence analysis, enabling the study to connect audience reception with production rationales and institutional constraints.

Table 1 Research Design and Data Collection Methods

Component	Data Source	Sample / Corpus	Data Collection Technique	Analytical Approach
Quantitative	Audience	400 undergraduate students in Kano State	Structured questionnaire (Likert-scale survey)	Descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation
Qualitative	Industry practitioners	16 producers and directors	Semi-structured in-depth interviews	Reflexive thematic analysis
Documentary	Institutional records	Broadcaster schedules and platform data	Document review and content extraction	Triangulation and convergence analysis

Table 1 summarises the mixed-methods research design employed in this study, highlighting the integration of quantitative, qualitative, and documentary data sources. The quantitative survey captured audience perceptions and viewing patterns related to serialised Hausa films, providing empirical breadth and measurable trends. Qualitative interviews with producers and directors offered in-depth insight into decision-making processes, production organisation, and institutional influences shaping format transformation. Documentary analysis of broadcaster commissioning records and platform distribution practices enabled contextual validation of both audience and practitioner data. Together, these complementary methods allowed for triangulation and convergence, strengthening the analytical robustness of the study and ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the transition from short dramas to serialised storytelling in Hausa cinema.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Timeline and Pioneers

Respondents and practitioners converge on a relatively recent consolidation of serial production. While episodic experiments existed earlier, most interviewees situate the decisive shift to long-form serials in the 2012–2016 window with marked consolidation after 2015. Several titles are repeatedly cited as foundational exemplars (see Table 2).

Table 2 Timeline of selected pioneering Hausa serials

Title	Approximate Start / Premiere	Platform / Distributor	Significance
Kwana Casa'in	c. 2018 (aired on Arewa24; subsequent seasons)	Arewa24 / online uploads.	Early extended serial with political and social subplots; multiple seasons.

Dadin Kowa	Late 2010s to present	Arewa24 (flagship drama).	High production values and steady seasonal production; widely cited by practitioners.
Labarina	Multi-season (2016 onward)	Saira Movies / Arewa24 / YouTube.	Popular serial with mass youth appeal and numerous episodes.
Gidan Badamasi	Premiered c. 2019	Dorayi Films / YouTube television.	Sitcom-serial hybrid that showed commercial viability for recurring characters.

Source: Field Work Data, 2025

Table 2 summarises the coarse timeline evidence. Interviewees uniformly identified Kwana Casa'in, Dadin Kowa, Labarina and Gidan Badamasi as models that demonstrated both audience appetite and production feasibility for serial formats. Several interview participants emphasised incremental seasonality rather than single-block production:

"*After we saw the reaction to first season we realised people wanted more. So now we write for episodes season by season, not just one film and stop.*" (In-Depth Interview Participant 2, Personal Communication, Kano, June 2025)

3.2. Institutional drivers

The expansion of serialised Hausa film production has been shaped by a confluence of institutional transformations rather than by creative choice alone. Three interrelated drivers are particularly salient: the growth of Hausa-language satellite and digital broadcasters with the capacity to commission long-form drama, the increasing reliance on sponsorship and advertising models to finance episodic production, and experimental attempts to diversify distribution through streaming platforms. Together, these forces have reconfigured incentives within the industry, favouring serial formats over single-release productions.

Producers consistently identified Arewa24 as a pivotal commissioning institution that has normalised episodic production through fixed programming slots and on-demand archives. By positioning itself as a leading producer and distributor of Hausa-language content, Arewa24 has created an institutional environment in which serial scheduling is both economically viable and operationally predictable (Abdulbaqi et al., 2023; Zaki & Dole, 2024). In parallel, the establishment of local cinema exhibition infrastructure most notably the opening of FilmHouse in Kano in 2015 introduced a discourse of repeatability and brand franchising into the industry. Press coverage highlights how FilmHouse's collaborations with prominent actors and producers encouraged the development of recognisable properties with the potential for extended runs and sequels (Bisschoff & Murphy, 2017).

By contrast, platform-based distribution initiatives have produced uneven outcomes. While Hausa-oriented streaming services such as Kallo.ng and smaller ventures like Northflix initially promised alternative revenue streams and greater autonomy from broadcasters, they have faced persistent challenges related to scale, infrastructure, and sustained commissioning. Industry practitioners noted that Northflix's early momentum in 2019 was not followed by long-term investment or regular content acquisition, reinforcing broadcasters' continued dominance in the serial economy. These practitioner accounts are supported by journalistic analyses, which document the limited commercial

viability of such platforms and their inability to displace satellite television as the primary institutional anchor for serial production in Kannywood.

Table 3 Survey Indicators of Institutional Perception (selected items)

Item / indicator	Agreement (SA + A) (%)
Producers play a critical role in industry direction (C5)	69.5%
Episodic format supports flexible viewing and advertising windows (C10)	70.0%
Global media influence in narrative techniques (C11)	91.0%

Source: Field Work Data, 2025

Table 3 synthesises key survey indicators related to institutional drivers of serial production in Hausa cinema, as perceived by audience respondents. The results indicate broad recognition of producers as central agents in shaping industry direction, with nearly seven in ten respondents (69.5%) acknowledging their strategic role. A comparable proportion (70.0%) agreed that the episodic format facilitates flexible viewing patterns and accommodates advertising and sponsorship windows, underscoring the perceived economic and scheduling advantages of serialisation. Notably, an overwhelming majority of respondents (91.0%) identified global media influence as a significant factor in shaping contemporary narrative techniques, suggesting strong awareness of transnational storytelling conventions. When triangulated with interview data, these perceptions are explained by institutional realities namely broadcasters provide predictable commissioning slots and editorial frameworks, sponsors seek sustained brand visibility across multiple episodes, and digital platforms offer, albeit unevenly opportunities for archival circulation and supplementary monetisation. Together, these findings position institutional arrangements not merely as external enablers but as structuring forces that actively shape narrative form, production rhythm, and the economic logic of serialised Hausa film production.

"Arewa24 will pay for a season and keep it running, sponsors want their message across six episodes. It helps pay people and gives us predictability." (In-Depth Interview Participant 5, Personal Communication, Kaduna, June 2025)

3.3. Technical and Labour Reorganisation

The transition to serialised production necessitated substantial organisational restructuring compared with earlier single-title home-video practices. Practitioners consistently reported that serial formats impose temporal and logistical demands that cannot be met through ad hoc production arrangements. Unlike stand-alone films, serials require continuity across episodes, predictability in delivery schedules, and coordination among multiple creative and technical units. As a result, producers were compelled to adopt more systematic planning mechanisms that align production workflows with broadcaster timetables and sponsorship commitments.

One major adaptation involved the introduction of structured production calendars and batch shooting strategies. Episodes are now planned and filmed in blocks, allowing producers to minimise set construction costs and maximise the efficient use of locations and equipment. Batch production also enables actors to organise their commitments over extended periods, reducing the uncertainty associated with sporadic shoots. Interviewees

described multi-month production cycles in which shooting phases are deliberately interspersed with post-production windows, a practice that reflects increasing temporal discipline and managerial coordination within serial production.

A second organisational shift concerns the professionalisation of script development through episodic writing and collaborative authorship. Whereas earlier Hausa films often relied on individual scriptwriters or improvisational practices, serialised productions increasingly employ writing teams or informal "writers' rooms" tasked with planning long-term narrative arcs, episode-level pacing, and cliff-hanger placement. Practitioners identified this shift as a critical marker of industrial maturation, as it enables narrative consistency, anticipatory storytelling, and strategic audience retention across seasons. The adoption of writers' teams also redistributes creative authority, embedding storytelling within collective and iterative production processes.

Labour relations have similarly been reconfigured through the stabilisation of cast and crew arrangements. Producers increasingly negotiate short-term contracts to secure recurring actors for entire seasons, while technical personnel are retained as core teams rather than hired on a project-by-project basis. Directors noted that this labour continuity improves performance consistency, reduces rehearsal time, and facilitates smoother technical execution. Content analysis supports these accounts, revealing greater visual and narrative coherence across episodes, including consistent mise-en-scène, more elaborate continuity markers, and routine post-production techniques to sustain episodic suspense. Although technical upgrading remains uneven, improvements in sound quality, multi-camera use, and post-production integration indicate a gradual shift toward more standardised serial production practices.

3.4. Audience Routines

The emergence of serialised Hausa film production has significantly reshaped audience viewing practices, introducing more regularised and anticipatory modes of engagement. Survey data and interview testimony converge in showing that serial formats encourage routinised consumption rather than sporadic viewing. Unlike single-title home videos, serials create temporal structures that organise audience attention around episode releases, thereby embedding viewing within everyday schedules. This shift reflects broader global patterns of serial consumption while remaining locally mediated by broadcaster programming and platform availability (Rubenking & Bracken, 2021).

One prominent behavioural change is the rise of appointment viewing, particularly among younger audiences. A substantial proportion of student respondents reported following episodes according to fixed broadcast schedules or platform release cycles. This pattern is reinforced by Arewa24's consistent programming strategy and the use of social-media reminders that signal episode availability. Appointment viewing reintroduces temporal discipline into media consumption, countering assumptions that digital audiences are entirely on-demand and highlighting the continued relevance of scheduled broadcasting in shaping viewing routines.

Serial formats have also gained particular traction among university students and younger urban viewers, who expressed strong preferences for recurring characters and ongoing plotlines. Interviewees noted that episodic narratives facilitate peer discussion, speculation, and collective interpretation, especially in campus environments where media consumption is embedded in social interaction. The appeal of serials thus extends beyond narrative continuity to include their capacity to generate shared cultural reference points, reinforcing youth identification with specific characters and story arcs.

A further dimension of audience engagement concerns the circulation of serial content on social media platforms. Episodes frequently generate short clips, memes, and discussion threads on WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok, extending the lifespan of each episode beyond its initial broadcast. Practitioners described social-media circulation as a crucial form of word-of-mouth promotion that operates at minimal cost while amplifying audience reach. Broadcasters such as Arewa24 and official production channels strategically release selected clips to stimulate interest and sustain viewership between episodes (Abdulbaqi et al., 2023). As one producer observed, audience attachment often centres more on characters and actors than on individual plot points, underscoring the affective power of serial storytelling.

Table 4 Indicators of Audience Engagement (survey items and qualitative corroboration)

Engagement metric	Evidence
Appointment viewing	Frequent mentions in interviews; students report following weekly episodes
Youth social sharing	High circulation of episode clips on WhatsApp and TikTok; platform analytics show repeat views
Sustained character-based loyalty	Interviews confirm fan interest in recurring characters and seasonal returns

Source: Field Work Data, 2025

Table 4 summarises key indicators of audience engagement with Hausa serials by integrating survey responses and qualitative interview evidence. The table highlights three interrelated engagement metrics: appointment viewing, youth-driven social sharing, and sustained character-based loyalty. Frequent interview references to weekly episode tracking corroborate survey findings on scheduled viewing habits. High circulation of episode clips on social media platforms demonstrates the role of peer-to-peer sharing in extending audience engagement beyond formal broadcast contexts. Finally, practitioner accounts of audience interest in recurring characters and seasonal returns illustrate how serialisation fosters long-term emotional investment. Collectively, these indicators confirm that serial formats have restructured audience routines, transforming Hausa film consumption into an ongoing, socially embedded, and anticipatory practice.

A producer noted, *"People call us about characters. They want the next episode. Sometimes they talk more about the actor than the plot."* (In-Depth Interview Participant 8, Personal Communication, Jos, June 2025)

3.5. Risks and Trade-Offs

While serialisation has expanded the creative and economic possibilities of Hausa film production, it has simultaneously introduced a set of interrelated risks that complicate long-term sustainability (see Table 5). Unlike single-title productions, serial formats depend on continuity across multiple episodes or seasons, exposing producers to prolonged financial, regulatory, and social pressures. Interview data indicate that these risks are not incidental but structurally embedded in the serial production model.

The most frequently cited challenge concerns the continuity of financing. Extended narrative arcs require sustained funding through multi-season commissioning or rolling sponsorship agreements. Several producers reported recurrent cash-flow disruptions when sponsors withdrew mid-season or when widespread piracy eroded expected

returns. The uneven performance and in some cases collapse of Hausa-oriented streaming platforms further intensified producers' reliance on satellite broadcasters and advertisers as primary sources of financial stability. This dependence narrows producers' bargaining power and increases vulnerability to institutional withdrawal.

Regulatory exposure constitutes a second major risk associated with serial production. The episodic nature of serials amplifies regulatory visibility, as repeated broadcasts heighten public scrutiny and institutional sensitivity. Interviewees expressed concern about the cumulative effects of regulation, noting that content deemed acceptable in isolation may attract sanctions when viewed across multiple episodes. High-profile bans and suspensions of popular Hausa serials have reinforced a climate of caution within the industry, particularly in relation to oversight by the Kano State Censorship Board. Media coverage documenting these regulatory interventions underscores their disruptive impact on production schedules and audience trust (Andersen et al., 2023; Serrano-Puche et al., 2023).

A third trade-off relates to community acceptability and moral negotiation. Serial producers operate within a social environment in which cultural and religious norms exert significant influence over narrative boundaries. Interviewees described instances in which episodes were edited, postponed, or entirely withdrawn following consultations with community elders or religious leaders. Attempts to explore contemporary youth experiences or social tensions often triggered objections, requiring narrative revision or omission. As one director noted, the need to balance creative experimentation with communal expectations imposes continuous self-censorship, reinforcing the precarious equilibrium between innovation and social legitimacy. *"We try sometimes to push themes about youth life but elders complain, so we cut or change scenes. You must be careful or the board will stop you."* (In-Depth Interview Participant 4, Personal Communication, Kano, June 2025)

Table 5 Summary of Principal Trade-Offs

Benefit of serials	Principal risk
Predictable audience retention	Higher financing obligation
Greater sponsor interest	Increased regulatory visibility
Stronger brand and character loyalty	Potential community backlash

Source: Field Work Data, 2025

Table 5 summarises the principal trade-offs associated with the adoption of serial formats in Hausa cinema by juxtaposing key benefits against corresponding risks. Predictable audience retention and stronger character-based loyalty enhance the commercial appeal of serials, yet these advantages come with higher financing obligations and extended exposure to regulatory oversight. Similarly, increased sponsor interest supports production continuity but also intensifies institutional visibility and vulnerability to censorship. Potential community backlash further complicates narrative innovation, particularly in culturally sensitive contexts. Taken together, the table illustrates that serialisation functions as a double-edged process: it enables industrial consolidation and audience engagement while simultaneously generating structural vulnerabilities that must be carefully managed.

The empirical picture indicates that the emergence of serialised Hausa drama is institutionally enabled, technically supported and audience-driven. Broadcasters and sponsors supply the scaffolding; producers reorganise labour and workflows to meet

episodic demands; audiences adopt appointment viewing habits and social sharing practices. However, sustainable consolidation depends on predictable financing, robust platform ecosystems and calibrated responses to censorship and community expectations.

3.6. Serialisation, Institutional Restructuring, and Cultural Negotiation in Hausa Cinema

This study demonstrates that the transformation of Hausa cinema from short, self-contained dramas to extended serialised storytelling is best understood as an industry-wide reconfiguration shaped by economic pressure, audience realignment, and institutional intervention. Rather than a purely aesthetic evolution, serialisation in Kannywood reflects what Hesmondhalgh (2005) describes as the restructuring of cultural production under conditions of uncertainty, where creative forms adapt to stabilise labour, revenue, and audience attention. The findings confirm that format change emerged through the interaction of market constraints and institutional opportunity rather than through deliberate imitation of global television models alone.

Economically, serialisation functioned as a risk-management strategy in response to declining returns from single-title home videos and pervasive piracy. As documented in Nigerian film scholarship, piracy has systematically undermined traditional distribution models, forcing producers to seek alternative revenue structures that distribute risk across time and platforms (M. Ibrahim, 2024). Serial formats enable staggered sponsorship, broadcaster fees, and repeat exposure, aligning with what Kraidy (2020) terms "serial accumulation," where value is generated incrementally rather than at a single point of sale. The commissioning role of Arewa24 thus emerges as a critical institutional anchor, transforming episodic storytelling into a predictable commercial practice consistent with UNESCO's observations on the stabilising effects of broadcaster-led cultural industries (Zaki & Dole, 2024).

Audience transformation constitutes a second decisive driver. Survey and interview data reveal that younger viewers increasingly favour continuity, character-based attachment, and anticipatory viewing preferences long associated with serial consumption globally (Kozloff, 2016). These findings resonate with audience studies that conceptualise serial viewing as a social practice embedded in peer discussion, speculation, and shared temporality (Rubenking & Bracken, 2021). In the Hausa context, serials facilitate what Livingstone (2025) describes as "mediated ritual," whereby scheduled viewing and social-media circulation reinsert collective rhythms into fragmented digital consumption. Serialisation thus aligns industrial incentives with evolving audience habits rather than simply following technological change.

Formally and organisationally, the shift to serials prompted measurable changes in dramaturgy, labour organisation, and production rhythms. The adoption of cliff-hangers, segmented narrative arcs, and ensemble casts mirrors serial storytelling conventions identified in comparative television theory (Mittell, 2015). At the same time, the emergence of writers' rooms, production calendars, and contracted casts reflects an early stage of labour formalisation consistent with Hesmondhalgh's (2024) account of professionalisation in emerging cultural industries. However, the uneven technical upgrading observed in content analysis supports Silverstone's (2003) argument that media forms are domesticated within material and cultural constraints, producing incremental rather than wholesale aesthetic transformation.

Institutionally, serialisation has intensified producers' exposure to regulatory oversight and community negotiation. Repeated episodic visibility increases the likelihood of censorship intervention, compelling producers to adopt routine self-regulation and pre-

emptive script vetting. This dynamic reflects Livingstone's (2025) observation that serial continuity magnifies regulatory sensitivity by extending moral and cultural scrutiny over time. In Kannywood, the Kano State Censorship Board operates as both a constraint and a structuring force, shaping narrative boundaries while inadvertently standardising production practices. Serialisation thus reconfigures governance relationships, embedding regulation into everyday production workflows rather than treating it as an episodic hurdle.

Comparatively, Kannywood's serial transition illustrates a pattern of selective convergence with global serial models. While producers adopt widely circulating techniques such as suspense-driven endings and character continuity, these are consistently embedded within Hausa-Islamic moral frameworks and oral narrative traditions, including didactic dialogue and musical interludes (M. T. Ibrahim, 2023). This selective adaptation supports Straubhaar's notion of cultural proximity, whereby audiences favour formats that balance familiarity with innovation. Consequently, while such localisation may constrain global exportability, it strengthens regional loyalty and cross-border circulation within Hausa-speaking communities, reinforcing sustainability through cultural resonance rather than scale alone.
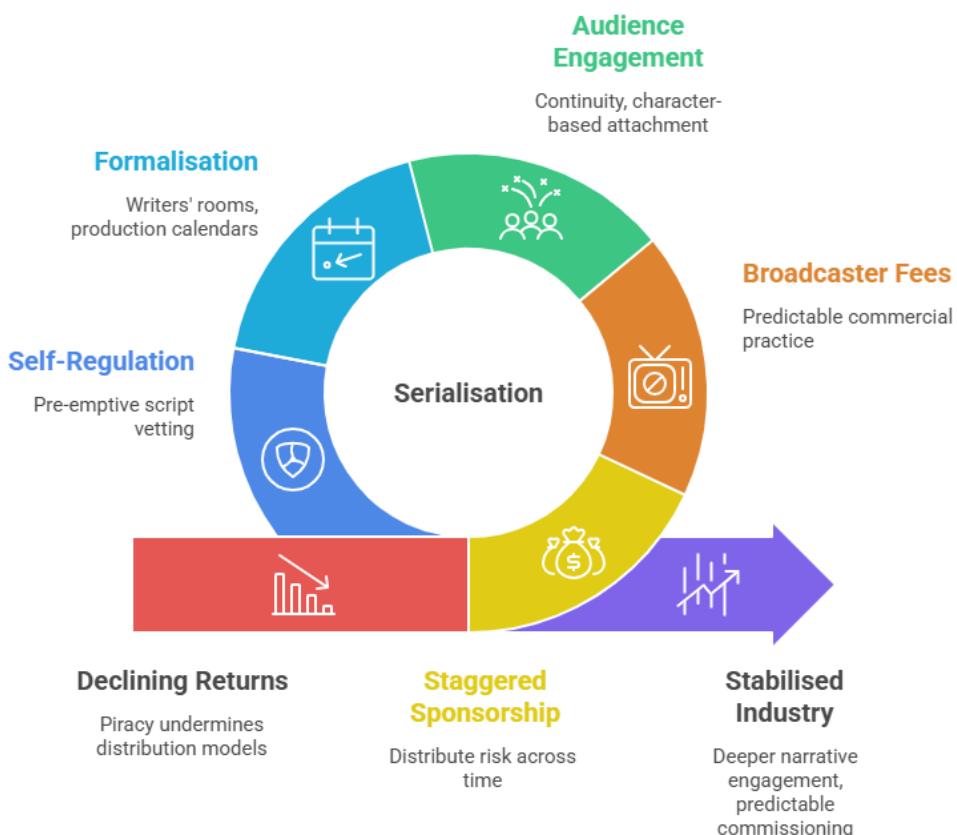

Figure 1 Serialisation Stabilises Hausa Cinema

The figure 1 illustrates how serialisation functions as a stabilising mechanism for Hausa cinema by transforming structural vulnerabilities into coordinated industrial practices. It shows a progression from declining returns caused by piracy toward a more stabilised industry through staggered sponsorship and predictable broadcaster fees, which distribute financial risk over time. At the production level, serialisation encourages formalisation through writers' rooms and production calendars, alongside self-regulation

via pre-emptive script vetting to manage censorship and community expectations. These institutional and organisational adjustments are reinforced by heightened audience engagement rooted in continuity and character-based attachment, ultimately enabling deeper narrative investment and more reliable commissioning structures within Kannywood.

The transition from short drama to serialised storytelling in Kannywood represents a pragmatic recalibration of form under structural pressure. Serialisation has enabled deeper narrative engagement, stabilised aspects of labour organisation, and aligned production with contemporary audience routines. Yet consolidation remains fragile due to persistent piracy, uneven platform ecosystems, and regulatory complexity. As comparative media industry research suggests, long-term sustainability will depend on predictable commissioning arrangements, diversified revenue models, and supportive policy frameworks that recognise serial production as a cornerstone of regional cultural economies. Future growth will hinge not only on industrial reform but also on maintaining the cultural specificity that underpins audience loyalty.

4. Conclusion

This study examined the transformation of Hausa cinema from short, stand-alone dramas to serialised storytelling within the post-independence Nigerian media landscape. Empirically, the findings demonstrate that serial production consolidated primarily between 2012 and 2016, with marked expansion after 2015 following the institutionalisation of broadcaster commissioning. Survey data from 400 respondents indicate strong audience support for serial formats: 70.0% agreed that episodic storytelling accommodates flexible viewing and advertising windows, 69.5% recognised producers as central agents shaping industry direction, and 91.0% identified global media influence in contemporary narrative techniques. Qualitative interviews with 16 producers and directors further confirmed that serials such as Daɗin Kowa, Kwana Casa'in, Labarina, and Gidan Badamasi functioned as formative exemplars, demonstrating both production feasibility and sustained audience demand.

The discussion situates these findings within broader theories of media serialisation, cultural production, and institutional restructuring. Serialisation in Kannywood emerges as a pragmatic industrial strategy shaped by economic precarity, evolving audience routines, and broadcaster-led commissioning rather than as a simple aesthetic shift. While producers selectively adopted global serial conventions such as cliff-hangers, ensemble casts, and episodic arcs, these forms were consistently embedded within Hausa-Islamic moral frameworks and oral narrative traditions, supporting cultural proximity and audience loyalty. At the same time, serial production reconfigured labour organisation through writers' teams, batch shooting, and contracted casts, indicating early-stage professionalisation. However, sustainability remains contingent upon negotiated regulatory compliance, stable financing, and the maintenance of community acceptability.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The survey sample was geographically concentrated in Kano State and focused primarily on university students, limiting generalisability across rural audiences and other Hausa-speaking regions. In addition, the analysis prioritised production and institutional perspectives, leaving audience ethnography and textual semiotics underexplored. Future research should therefore expand comparative sampling across northern Nigeria and neighbouring West African countries, examine gendered and generational interpretations of serial content, and analyse platform-specific monetisation strategies in greater depth. Longitudinal

studies tracking financing models, regulatory interventions, and audience loyalty over multiple seasons would further illuminate the conditions under which serialised Hausa cinema can achieve durable consolidation in an increasingly fragmented media environment.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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