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Early Kannywood Cinema as Cultural Memory through Moral Communication, Audience Reception and Practitioner Perspectives

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Abstract. Early Kannywood cinema represents an important site of cultural memory in which Hausa traditions, moral values, and communal identities are reproduced through audiovisual narratives. This study investigates how early Hausa-language films function as instruments of cultural memory through their narrative conventions, moral messages, and culturally embedded aesthetic practices. The study employed a convergent mixed-methods design combining content analysis of 20 early Hausa films, a structured survey of 400 undergraduate students from five universities in Kano State, Nigeria, and semi-structured interviews with 16 experienced film producers and directors from Kano, Kaduna, and Jos. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and relevant association tests, while interview data were examined through reflexive thematic analysis. Findings from the three data sources were integrated to identify convergences and divergences between cinematic representations, audience recollections, and practitioner accounts. The findings reveal that early Kannywood cinema employed proverbs, traditional costumes, familiar communal settings, elder-mediated conflict resolution, and explicit moral dialogue to communicate cultural values. Audience recognition was particularly strong regarding the promotion of Hausa norms (90%), traditional entertainment styles (85%), and the educational character of narratives (84%). Practitioner interviews further indicated that limited production resources and institutional expectations shaped both aesthetic choices and didactic storytelling conventions. Early Kannywood films functioned not merely as entertainment but as communicative resources through which cultural knowledge and moral expectations were reproduced and remembered.

Keywords: Early Kannywood cinema; Cultural memory; Moral communication; Audience reception; Hausa film; Practitioner perspectives.

1. Introduction

Cinema is not merely a medium of entertainment, it is also a cultural form through which communities represent their identities, negotiate social values, and preserve interpretations of the past (Bezerra, 2026; Elsaesser, 2025; Nagib, 2025). In societies

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where oral traditions remain central to everyday communication, audiovisual narratives can provide an important bridge between inherited cultural knowledge and changing forms of media consumption. This relationship is particularly relevant to Kannywood, the Hausa-language film industry based primarily in northern Nigeria, where film narratives intersect with Hausa language, religious sensibilities, social customs, and communal expectations. Ibrahim (2025) demonstrates that Kannywood is a contested cultural space in which filmmakers negotiate questions of faith, identity, language, and audience expectations. From this perspective, early Hausa-language films should be examined not only as historical entertainment products but also as cultural texts that communicate and reproduce shared understandings of social life.

The concept of cultural memory provides a useful framework for understanding how films may contribute to the continuity of collective identity. Assmann (2011) explains that cultural memory is sustained through symbolic forms, narratives, and practices that enable societies to transmit meaningful representations of their past beyond individual recollection. Film can participate in this process by preserving recognizable settings, speech patterns, clothing, rituals, and narrative conventions that audiences associate with a particular cultural community (Haux et al., 2021; Nuri et al., 2025; Qian et al., 2026; Thompson, 2013). Nevertheless, cultural memory should not be understood as a passive or complete reproduction of the past. Rather, remembered traditions are selected, interpreted, and rearticulated through the cultural forms available in each historical period. Early Kannywood cinema can therefore be approached as a medium through which aspects of Hausa social experience were represented, made memorable, and potentially transmitted across generations. This perspective shifts analytical attention from the presence of cultural symbols alone to the communicative processes through which those symbols acquire social meaning.

An important dimension of this process is the relationship between oral performance and cinematic storytelling. Hausa cultural expression includes oral narratives, proverbs, songs, verbal artistry, and forms of public performance that communicate social knowledge through memorable language and embodied interaction. Wang (2024) examines the relationship between traditional theatre, cultural performance, and Hausa video films, highlighting the relevance of performance traditions for understanding the development of Kannywood. Such conventions can be translated into film through proverbial dialogue, expressive gestures, traditional costumes, familiar domestic environments, and scenes in which elders or community members participate in resolving disputes (Agbejule & Lehtineva, 2022; Greig, 2025). These elements are not simply decorative references to tradition; they may also structure the ways characters express authority, negotiate obligations, and communicate judgments about acceptable conduct. Examining these features makes it possible to investigate how early Hausa films transformed inherited cultural resources into audiovisual forms that were accessible to contemporary audiences.

The cultural significance of early Kannywood cinema is also closely connected to moral communication. Films can communicate normative expectations by presenting conflicts involving family responsibilities, respect for elders, interpersonal relationships, religious commitments, and community welfare. However, moral communication should not be reduced to the assumption that audiences automatically accept the messages presented on screen. Wolfram (2026) encoding/decoding approach emphasizes that media producers encode meanings within cultural and institutional conditions, while audiences interpret those meanings through their own social experiences and interpretive

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frameworks. Consequently, a film intended to promote a particular moral value may be understood, negotiated, or questioned differently by different viewers (Kriegeskorte & Douglas, 2019; Song, 2026). This distinction is important for studying early Kannywood because the identification of didactic dialogue or morally resolved storylines does not, by itself, demonstrate how viewers remember or evaluate those messages. A stronger analysis must therefore consider both the moral meanings represented in film texts and the ways audiences recognize and interpret those meanings.

The production context further complicates the relationship between cinematic form, cultural representation, and moral instruction. Filmmakers work within particular technological, economic, institutional, and cultural conditions that influence the stories they tell and the means through which those stories are communicated. UNESCO (2021), in its assessment of the African film and audiovisual industries, identifies structural challenges and development priorities that affect film production, distribution, and the sustainability of creative industries across the continent. In the Kannywood context (Adamu & Abubakar, 2025; Ibrahim, 2026; Salihu & Ohaja, 2025), practitioners' accounts are particularly valuable for understanding why certain narrative conventions, locations, performance styles, or communicative strategies were selected. Such accounts can help distinguish deliberate cultural choices from formal features shaped by practical constraints or institutional expectations. Moreover, examining the perspectives of producers and directors alongside film content and audience responses enables a more comprehensive account of how cultural meanings are constructed, circulated, and remembered. The practitioner perspective thus complements textual interpretation rather than serving merely as background information about filmmaking.

Despite the relevance of cultural memory, moral communication, and audience interpretation to the study of regional cinema, these dimensions need to be examined in relation to one another rather than treated as separate analytical concerns. Research on cultural memory explains how symbolic forms sustain collective identity (Assmann, 2011), while reception theory emphasizes that audiences participate in the production of media meaning (Shi, 2013; Singh & Pratima, 2022). Scholarship on Hausa video films also establishes the importance of traditional performance and cultural expression in Kannywood (Usman et al., 2025; Wita & Apip, 2020). However, an integrated empirical account of how the formal features of early Hausa films relate to contemporary audience recollections and practitioners' explanations remains an important avenue for investigation. In particular, analysing film texts alone cannot establish which features remain salient in audience memory, while audience responses alone cannot explain the production decisions that shaped those features (de Arruda, 2025; Stenner & Zittoun, 2026). Addressing this problem requires triangulating evidence from cinematic content, audience reception, and practitioner perspectives. This study responds to that need by bringing these three sources of evidence into a single analytical framework.

Accordingly, this study examines early Kannywood cinema as a site of cultural memory, focusing on the relationship between moral communication, audience reception, and practitioners' perspectives. It uses a convergent mixed-methods design combining content analysis of 20 early Hausa-language films, a structured survey of 400 undergraduate students from five universities in Kano State, Nigeria, and semi-structured interviews with 16 film producers and directors from Kano, Kaduna, and Jos. The study addresses three interconnected questions: how early Hausa films represented cultural practices and communicated moral expectations; how contemporary audiences recalled and evaluated these features; and how practitioners explained the creative and

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institutional conditions underlying their production. By integrating these perspectives, the article contributes an empirically grounded account of the relationship between regional cinema, cultural remembrance, and moral communication. It also offers implications for audiovisual heritage preservation, media education, and contemporary filmmaking practices seeking to engage with Hausa cultural traditions in an evolving digital environment.

2. Method

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods design to examine early Kannywood cinema as a medium of cultural memory through moral communication, audience reception, and practitioner perspectives (Fetters & Tajima, 2022; Morse, 2010; Palinkas et al., 2011). The design integrated quantitative and qualitative evidence collected from three complementary sources: content analysis of early Hausa-language films, a structured survey of university students, and semi-structured interviews with film practitioners. A convergent approach was appropriate because the study sought to examine the relationship between the cultural and moral features represented in film texts, their recognition among contemporary audiences, and the production considerations described by practitioners. The three datasets were analysed using procedures appropriate to their respective forms and subsequently integrated to identify areas of convergence, elaboration, and divergence. This integration enabled the study to interpret cinematic features not only as textual characteristics but also as elements potentially retained in audience memory and explained through practitioners' production experiences (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018).

The study involved three analytical groups: early Hausa-language films, undergraduate audiences, and experienced film practitioners. First, a purposive sample of 20 films was selected to represent the formative period of Hausa-language filmed drama. Eligible titles had to have been produced and publicly circulated before 2005, with archival recordings or credible secondary records available for analysis. Selection was informed by archival catalogues, market inventories, and practitioner recommendations. The sample included titles such as Baban Larai, Ruwan Bagaja, Shehu Umar, and Hukuma Maganin Yan Banza. Second, the audience component comprised 400 undergraduate students recruited from five universities in Kano State, Nigeria, using proportionate stratified sampling by institution. Third, the qualitative component involved 16 experienced practitioners, consisting of eight producers and eight directors from Kano, Kaduna, and Jos. Participants were purposively selected based on their professional experience and knowledge of Hausa film production. Interview recruitment continued until thematic saturation was reached, operationalised as three consecutive interviews producing no new primary codes (Ahopelto et al., 2025; Kenney & Salchak, 2025).

Data were collected through film content analysis, a structured questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews. The content analysis examined observable and interpretive features of the selected films, including shooting locations, communicative emphasis in dialogue, representations of moral contradiction, traditional performance elements, narrative pedagogical structures, and cultural-promotion themes. A structured coding framework was developed to enable consistent classification and comparison across the film corpus. The audience questionnaire contained items A5–A11, which measured respondents' attention to cinematic locations, dialogue and messages, moral contradictions, traditional entertainment styles, narrative educational functions, cultural promotion, and the characteristics of early film productions. The practitioner interviews

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explored production histories, the persistence of cultural and narrative conventions, and the technological, financial, and institutional factors influencing creative decisions. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes, was audio-recorded with informed consent, and transcribed verbatim for subsequent analysis.

Quantitative and qualitative datasets were analysed separately before being integrated. Film content was examined through manifest and latent coding to identify both directly observable features and the meanings implied by narrative and audiovisual conventions. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the prevalence of coded features across the 20 films. Survey data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25. Frequency distributions and cross-tabulations were used to describe audience responses, while chi-square tests examined associations between respondent demographics and reported feature recognition. Spearman rank-order correlations were applied where appropriate to compare ordinal measures across datasets. Interview transcripts were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis following Braun & Clarke (2006) approach, involving familiarisation with the data, initial coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and reporting. The analysis focused on practitioners' explanations of cultural representation, moral communication, production constraints, and the continuity of early filmmaking conventions.

Integration occurred through a convergence coding matrix that juxtaposed film-content findings, audience survey responses, and practitioner interview themes for corresponding analytical categories. The integrated evidence was classified in terms of corroboration, elaboration, or contradiction. Corroboration indicated agreement between data sources; elaboration occurred when one source provided additional explanation for a pattern identified in another; and contradiction identified differences requiring further interpretation. This procedure supported a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural and moral features were represented in early Kannywood cinema, recalled by contemporary audiences, and explained by practitioners. The integration strategy followed the principles of convergent mixed-methods research described by Creswell & Plano-Clark (2018).

Several procedures were used to strengthen the credibility and consistency of the analysis. A pilot coding exercise involving four film titles was conducted to refine coding definitions and coder instructions. Two coders independently coded 25% of the film sample. Inter-coder agreement was assessed using Cohen's kappa for categorical variables and intraclass correlation for continuous indices. A minimum kappa threshold of 0.70 was specified, and discrepancies were discussed to inform revisions to the codebook. Face validity was supported through consultation with two senior scholars of Hausa film and cross-checking coded scenes against practitioner accounts. For the qualitative component, participants were offered the opportunity to review interview transcripts for verification. Ethical approval was obtained from the Postgraduate Examination Board of the Department of Mass Communication, Bayero University, Kano. Interview participation was based on informed consent, and anonymity was protected where requested. Archival rights were respected throughout the research process. The study acknowledges three principal limitations namely incomplete archival availability for some early films, potential recall bias in audience survey responses, and the purposive selection of the film corpus, which limits the generalisability of findings beyond the titles examined. Triangulation across the three data sources was used to strengthen the interpretation of the findings while recognising these limitations.

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3. Results and Discussion

Drawing on a convergent mixed-methods approach, the analysis integrates content analysis of 20 early Hausa films, survey responses from 400 undergraduate students across five universities in Kano State, and interviews with 16 film producers and directors from Kano, Kaduna, and Jos. Combining these sources enables the study to examine how cultural values, social norms, and moral messages are represented in cinematic narratives, how audiences recognize these representations, and how practitioners understand the cultural and educational purposes of early Kannywood production. The findings are organized into three interconnected themes: cultural representation and the formation of Hausa cultural memory; moral communication, narrative pedagogy, and community values; and audience reception, production constraints, and the persistence of cinematic conventions.

The discussion interprets these findings in relation to the study's conceptual framework, particularly cultural memory and encoding/decoding theory. Rather than treating films merely as forms of entertainment, this analysis considers them cultural texts through which familiar social spaces, customary practices, moral expectations, and collective identities are represented and negotiated. The integration of textual, audience, and practitioner perspectives also makes it possible to identify areas of convergence and differences between filmmakers' intentions, cinematic representations, and audience perceptions. However, audience recognition of cultural symbols or moral messages is distinguished from evidence of lasting changes in attitudes, behavior, or intergenerational cultural transmission. The following subsections therefore examine both the cultural significance of early Kannywood cinema and the empirical boundaries of the claims that can be drawn from the available data.

4.1. Cultural Representation and the Formation of Hausa Cultural Memory

The content analysis of 20 early Hausa-language films reveals a recurring pattern of cultural representation through familiar social spaces, traditional costumes, and oral-performative conventions. Domestic compounds emerged as the most frequently reported filming locations, appearing in 13 films (65%), followed by marketplaces, which appeared in nine films (45%). Religious spaces were prominent in four films (20%), while urban or studio environments served as the dominant settings in three films (15%). These findings indicate that early Kannywood cinema frequently situated its narratives within recognisable environments associated with family relationships, everyday economic activities, religious life, and community interaction. Rather than functioning merely as backdrops, these locations provided culturally meaningful contexts through which audiences could interpret character relationships, social responsibilities, and moral conflicts.

Table 1 Distribution of Cultural and Social Settings in Early Kannywood Films

Setting category	Number of films	Percentage
Domestic compounds	13	65%
Marketplaces	9	45%
Religious spaces	4	20%
Urban or studio environments as dominant settings	3	15%
Total films analysed	20	100%

Source: Content analysis of 20 early Hausa-language films.

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The distribution in Table 1 demonstrates the prominence of domestic and community-based environments in the selected films. Domestic compounds appeared in almost two-thirds of the sample, suggesting that family life provided an important narrative setting through which social obligations, authority, interpersonal relationships, and moral expectations could be represented. In Hausa social contexts, the household can serve as a space where relationships between parents, children, spouses, and extended family members become visible through everyday interactions. The frequent representation of domestic compounds therefore enabled filmmakers to situate moral dilemmas within familiar social relationships rather than presenting them as abstract ethical questions.

Marketplaces constituted another important setting, appearing in 45% of the analysed films. Their presence suggests that early Kannywood narratives also incorporated spaces associated with commerce, social interaction, and everyday public life. Markets can provide narrative opportunities for encounters between different characters, the negotiation of economic interests, and the representation of social relationships beyond the household. Religious spaces, identified in 20% of the films, provided another setting through which religious practices and moral expectations could become part of the narrative environment. Meanwhile, urban or studio environments served as dominant settings in three films (15%), indicating that the selected corpus also included narratives situated in more urbanised or production-controlled environments.

The percentages in Table 1 should not be interpreted as mutually exclusive categories. A film may contain domestic, market, and religious scenes within the same narrative. Consequently, the percentages exceed 100% when combined because they represent the occurrence of particular settings rather than the distribution of films into four exclusive groups. This distinction is important for interpreting the data accurately: the results identify recurring spatial patterns, but they do not establish that each film belongs to only one setting category.

Audience responses reinforce the significance of these spatial representations. Among the 400 undergraduate respondents, 85% agreed or strongly agreed that they noticed shooting locations in earlier Hausa films. This corresponds to approximately 340 respondents, while the remaining 15%, or approximately 60 respondents, did not fall within the reported agreement category. The finding indicates that cinematic environments were recognisable to a substantial proportion of the surveyed audience. Such recognition is relevant because familiar locations can provide contextual cues that help viewers interpret the relationships, activities, and social expectations represented in a film.

The audience survey also revealed a strong perception of the cultural significance of early Kannywood cinema. Approximately 90% of respondents, equivalent to 360 out of 400 students, agreed that earlier Hausa films promoted Hausa cultural norms. This result complements the content analysis, which found that 10 of the 20 films (50%) scored highly on the composite cultural-promotion index. The comparison between these two measures is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Quantitative Indicators of Cultural Representation and Audience Recognition

Indicator	Data source	Result	Approximate equivalent
Films featuring domestic compounds	Content analysis	65%	13 of 20 films
Films featuring marketplaces	Content	45%	9 of 20 films

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Indicator	Data source	Result	Approximate equivalent
	analysis		
Films featuring religious spaces	Content analysis	20%	4 of 20 films
Films dominated by urban or studio environments	Content analysis	15%	3 of 20 films
Films with high cultural-promotion index scores	Content analysis	50%	10 of 20 films
Respondents noticing shooting locations	Audience survey	85%	Approximately 340 of 400 respondents
Respondents agreeing that earlier films promoted Hausa cultural norms	Audience survey	90%	Approximately 360 of 400 respondents
Total films analysed	Content analysis	100%	20 films
Total survey respondents	Audience survey	100%	400 respondents

Source: Content analysis and audience survey reported in the study.

The difference between the 50% of films receiving high cultural-promotion scores and the 90% of respondents who perceived cultural promotion is analytically important. It suggests that audience perceptions of cultural significance do not necessarily correspond directly to the proportion of films classified as having high cultural-promotion scores. Viewers may recognise cultural meanings through several interconnected elements, including familiar settings, character relationships, traditional clothing, dialogue, and customary practices. Moreover, a film that does not receive a high score on the composite index may still contain particular scenes or symbols that viewers consider culturally meaningful.

Nevertheless, the difference between these percentages should not be interpreted as evidence that particular scenes were more memorable or that audiences retained them over an extended period. The two indicators measure different phenomena: the content analysis assesses the cultural-promotion characteristics of the selected films, whereas the survey records audience perceptions. Without item-level cross-tabulations or additional statistical tests, the study cannot determine precisely which cinematic features account for the difference. The findings instead establish that cultural representation was prominent in the analysed corpus and that a substantial majority of surveyed students perceived early Hausa films as contributing to the promotion of Hausa cultural norms.

Traditional costumes and oral-performative elements further contributed to the cultural legibility of these films. The narratives frequently represented older male characters through traditional garments such as *babban riga* and associated headwear, while female characters appeared in traditional clothing, including wrappers, hijabs, and embroidered gowns. These visual conventions could communicate character identity, social position, age, and culturally situated expectations of respectability. Costume thus functioned as a visual sign through which audiences could interpret characters before or alongside their verbal interactions. However, the cultural meaning of a garment depended on its narrative context, the character wearing it, and the expectations through which viewers interpreted its appearance.

Oral-performative conventions also connected cinematic storytelling with established forms of Hausa expression. Proverbs, expressive dialogue, songs, and ritualised

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interactions provided ways to communicate values, express social criticism, and frame moral conflicts. Proverbs, for example, can condense complex social observations into familiar verbal forms, while songs and expressive dialogue can emphasise emotional or communal dimensions of a narrative. Ritualised interactions and conversations involving elders can also establish social hierarchies and expectations about appropriate conduct. Through these conventions, cultural meanings could be conveyed through recognisable verbal and performative forms rather than through extensive explanatory narration.

The available quantitative findings establish the prevalence of particular settings and the extent of audience recognition, but they do not provide separate numerical frequencies for traditional costumes, proverbs, songs, or ritualised interactions. These features are therefore discussed as qualitative patterns rather than presented as quantified findings. Future content analysis could strengthen this dimension by recording the frequency of each costume category, the number of films containing proverbs or songs, and the narrative contexts in which these elements appear. Such coding would make it possible to compare the relative prominence of different cultural signs and assess whether particular features are associated with higher cultural-promotion scores.

Practitioner interviews provide additional insight into how these representations were understood during production. One participant explained:

"Most stories happen at home or market because people recognise those places. If the scene is in the compound you know the family will decide, you know the lesson is coming" (Interview Participant 3, Kano, June 2025).

This account highlights the relationship between familiar settings and narrative expectations. The participant's observation suggests that filmmakers considered recognisable social environments useful for establishing the circumstances in which characters would make decisions and encounter moral dilemmas. The domestic compound was therefore not simply a convenient filming location; it could also establish a narrative framework in which family authority, responsibility, and the consequences of individual actions became understandable to viewers. The reference to the marketplace similarly indicates that everyday environments could help audiences connect cinematic situations with experiences beyond the screen.

Another practitioner emphasised the moral significance audiences attached to traditional clothing, observing that viewers could question the intended meaning of a scene when a character's dress departed from established expectations (Interview Participant 7, Kaduna, July 2025). This account indicates that costume choices were understood by practitioners as culturally meaningful rather than purely decorative. It also suggests that cinematic signs were interpreted in relation to shared social expectations. However, this interview represents a practitioner's perspective and should not be treated as evidence that all audiences interpret clothing in the same way. Differences in age, social experience, religious interpretation, and exposure to contemporary media may shape how viewers understand these visual representations.

The relationship between cinematic representation and cultural memory can be further interpreted through Assmann (2011) framework of cultural memory. From this perspective, cultural memory involves socially mediated practices through which selected representations of the past are maintained, interpreted, and made meaningful in the present. Early Kannywood films can be understood as one medium through which recognisable elements of Hausa social life were represented in repeatable audiovisual narratives. Domestic compounds, marketplaces, traditional garments, proverbs, and

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customary interactions provided recurring cultural references that audiences could identify within the cinematic experience.

Importantly, cultural memory should not be equated with the complete preservation of an unchanged cultural past. Films are selective representations shaped by narrative choices, production conditions, and the perspectives of their creators. The recurrence of particular locations or costumes does not mean that these elements capture the full diversity of Hausa cultural experience. Instead, cinema selects certain cultural signs, places them within particular storylines, and presents them in forms that may reinforce, reinterpret, or simplify existing social meanings. The finding that half of the analysed films received high cultural-promotion scores illustrates that the degree of cultural emphasis varied across the sample, even though audience perceptions of cultural promotion were widespread.

These findings also resonate with Ryfe (2024) performance theory, particularly the understanding that social meanings can be communicated through the re-enactment of gestures, speech patterns, and recognisable social roles. When cinematic characters reproduce familiar forms of address, customary interactions, or culturally recognisable clothing practices, they present social behaviour in a mediated performance. Such performances can make cultural conventions visible and available for interpretation. Nevertheless, the present study does not directly measure whether viewers reproduce these behaviours in everyday life; the findings support an interpretation of cultural representation and audience recognition rather than a definitive claim about behavioural imitation.

Wolfram (2026) encoding/decoding framework provides a further explanation for the relationship between filmmakers' representational choices and audience perceptions. Producers may encode cultural and moral meanings through familiar locations, costumes, dialogue, and character relationships, but audiences interpret these signs through their own social experiences and cultural knowledge. The survey finding that approximately 90% of respondents perceived earlier Hausa films as promoting cultural norms demonstrates broad agreement with the cultural significance of these films among the surveyed students. However, agreement with this general proposition does not establish that every respondent interpreted particular scenes identically or accepted every message embedded in a film. Audience recognition and audience interpretation remain related but distinct processes.

Taken together, the content analysis, survey results, and practitioner interviews indicate that early Kannywood cinema represented Hausa cultural identity through a combination of familiar social environments, traditional visual signs, and oral-performative conventions. The quantitative evidence demonstrates the prominence of domestic compounds in the selected films, the presence of marketplaces and religious spaces, and substantial audience recognition of locations and cultural promotion. The qualitative evidence helps explain why filmmakers considered these representations meaningful within their production practices. In relation to cultural memory, the findings suggest that early Kannywood cinema provided a mediated resource through which aspects of Hausa social life could be recognised and interpreted. However, the study establishes the presence and perceived significance of cultural representations rather than directly demonstrating long-term memory retention, intergenerational transmission, or changes in audience behaviour.

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4.2. Moral Communication, Narrative Pedagogy, and Community Values

The prominence of explicit moral communication and educational storytelling in early Kannywood cinema. The content analysis showed that 15 of the 20 films (75%) contained regular to high levels of explicit messaging, while 11 films (55%) received the highest score on the narrative pedagogic scale. By contrast, six films (30%) depicted overt deviant behaviour according to the study's coding criteria. These findings suggest that moral communication was a prominent feature of the selected films, although its intensity and narrative expression varied across the sample. Rather than communicating values exclusively through symbolic imagery or indirect implications, many films incorporated moral judgments into dialogue, character decisions, interpersonal conflicts, and narrative resolutions.

Table 3 Distribution of Moral Communication and Narrative Pedagogy in Early Kannywood Films

Analytical indicator	Number of films	Percentage
Films with regular to high levels of explicit messaging	15	75%
Films receiving the highest score on the narrative pedagogic scale	11	55%
Films depicting overt deviant behaviour	6	30%
Films not classified as having regular to high explicit messaging	5	25%
Films not receiving the highest narrative pedagogic score	9	45%
Films without coded overt deviant behaviour	14	70%
Total films analysed	20	100%

Source: Content analysis of 20 early Hausa-language films.

The results in Table 3 reveal that explicit moral messaging was more prevalent than the highest level of narrative pedagogy. Three-quarters of the analysed films contained regular to high levels of explicit messaging, whereas just over half received the highest score on the narrative pedagogic scale. This difference suggests that the presence of explicit messages did not necessarily mean that every film consistently employed the strongest educational narrative techniques. A film could communicate moral judgments through dialogue or character interactions without making instruction the dominant organising principle of the entire narrative. Conversely, films receiving the highest pedagogic score may have integrated moral instruction more systematically into the development and resolution of their central conflicts.

The finding that six films (30%) depicted overt deviant behaviour adds another dimension to the interpretation. The representation of misconduct does not necessarily indicate that a film endorsed such behaviour. As described in the study, deviant actions were generally situated within narratives that emphasised consequences, repentance, or the restoration of normative order. In these cases, misconduct could function as a narrative device through which the consequences of particular decisions became visible. Conflict provided an opportunity to distinguish between socially approved and disapproved conduct, while the eventual resolution offered a framework through which the audience could interpret the actions of the characters. Nevertheless, the content analysis should distinguish the occurrence of deviant behaviour from the moral position adopted by a film towards that behaviour.

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The figures in Table 3 describe different analytical dimensions and should not be treated as mutually exclusive categories. A film containing explicit moral messaging could also receive the highest pedagogic score and depict deviant behaviour. Similarly, the five films not classified as having regular to high explicit messaging should not automatically be interpreted as containing no moral communication; they simply did not fall within that reported coding category. These distinctions are important because the indicators measure different aspects of narrative construction rather than dividing the 20 films into separate groups.

Audience survey findings provide a complementary perspective on the prominence of moral communication. A total of 84% of the 400 undergraduate respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they paid attention to dialogue and messaging in earlier Hausa films. The same proportion recognised the educational character of the films' narrative techniques. If the reported percentages are exact, each figure corresponds to 336 respondents, leaving 64 respondents (16%) outside the combined agreement category for each item. The findings indicate that dialogue and educational storytelling were salient features in the surveyed audience's perceptions of early Kannywood cinema.

Table 4 Audience Recognition of Moral Communication and Educational Storytelling

Survey indicator	Agreement	Approximate number of respondents	Other responses
Respondents who paid attention to dialogue and messaging	84%	336	16% (64 respondents)
Respondents who recognised the educational character of narrative techniques	84%	336	16% (64 respondents)
Total respondents	100%	400	—

Source: Audience survey reported in the study.

The convergence between the film analysis and the audience survey in table 4 strengthens the interpretation that moral communication was an important characteristic of early Kannywood cinema. The content analysis identified explicit messaging in 75% of the selected films, while 84% of respondents reported paying attention to dialogue and messaging. Likewise, 55% of films received the highest score on the narrative pedagogic scale, while 84% of respondents recognised the educational character of the narrative techniques. These results suggest that audiences perceived educational and moral dimensions in early Hausa films more broadly than the proportion of films classified at the highest pedagogic level alone might imply.

However, these figures cannot be interpreted as a direct statistical relationship between the characteristics of individual films and the responses of individual viewers. The content-analysis percentages describe a corpus of 20 films, whereas the survey percentages describe 400 respondents. Unless respondents' exposure to particular films is documented and linked to their answers, the study cannot establish that the films classified as highly pedagogic were specifically responsible for the audience responses. The figures instead provide complementary evidence: moral messaging was identifiable in a substantial proportion of the selected films, and a substantial majority of respondents recognised dialogue and educational storytelling as salient features.

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The moral themes identified in the study included family obligations, respect for elders, religious responsibilities, social misconduct, health guidance, and community welfare. These themes connected individual conduct with wider expectations concerning family relationships and communal life. Family obligations, for example, situated personal decisions within networks of responsibility, while respect for elders foregrounded the role of age and social authority in guiding conduct. Religious responsibilities provided a framework for presenting ethical expectations, whereas narratives involving social misconduct enabled filmmakers to dramatise the consequences of actions considered inconsistent with community norms. Health guidance and community welfare also show that moral communication could extend beyond interpersonal behaviour to issues with broader social implications.

Table 5 Thematic Framework for Interpreting Moral Communication in Early Kannywood Cinema

Moral or social theme	Narrative focus	Potential communicative function
Family obligations	Responsibilities and relationships within the family	Connect individual decisions with family duties and expectations
Respect for elders	Advice, authority, and intergenerational relationships	Present elders as sources of guidance and social authority
Religious responsibilities	Religious expectations and ethical conduct	Relate personal behaviour to religiously informed norms
Social misconduct	Actions that conflict with accepted expectations	Dramatise consequences and the possibility of repentance
Health guidance	Public-health issues, including polio and family planning	Communicate practical information through accessible narratives
Community welfare	Collective responsibilities and social well-being	Frame individual conduct in relation to broader communal interests

Source: Thematic synthesis of the moral issues described in the study and the practitioner interviews.

Table 5 organises the moral themes reported in the study according to their narrative focus and potential communicative function. It does not imply that every film contained all six themes or that each theme occurred with equal frequency. The available findings do not provide a film-by-film count for these categories. Their inclusion therefore serves to clarify the different dimensions of moral communication without introducing unsupported numerical claims. A more detailed quantitative analysis would require a separate coding matrix identifying which themes appeared in each film and how prominently they were represented.

The practitioners' accounts help explain the production rationale underlying this narrative pattern. One producer recalled:

"Many of the early dramas were made with a purpose. Sometimes broadcasters asked for a film to teach about polio or family planning. So we put the message right in the lines" (Interview Participant 1, Kano, June 2025).

This account indicates that explicit moral and educational communication could emerge from institutional objectives as well as from filmmakers' own narrative choices.

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Where broadcasters requested films addressing public-health issues, dialogue offered a practical means of incorporating the intended information into the story. The interview therefore expands the interpretation of didactic storytelling beyond the transmission of customary values: moral communication could also serve as a channel for public education. The reference to polio and family planning illustrates how social and health-related messages could be integrated into the familiar format of dramatic dialogue.

Another practitioner described the practical preference for familiar narrative devices, including family meetings, elders' interventions, and proverbs, when more elaborate action sequences or special effects were difficult to produce (Interview Participant 5, Jos, June 2025). This account suggests that the narrative style of early Kannywood cinema was shaped partly by production constraints. Family discussions, verbal exchanges, and proverbial conclusions could communicate conflict and resolution without requiring elaborate visual effects or technically demanding sequences. At the same time, these devices drew on recognisable forms of social interaction, making them compatible with narratives centred on community values and interpersonal responsibilities.

The two interviews point to the interaction of at least three factors in the production of moral communication namely cultural expectations, institutional educational objectives, and available production resources. Cultural expectations supplied familiar themes and social roles; broadcaster priorities could introduce specific educational messages; and production constraints encouraged reliance on dialogue, family meetings, and verbal performances. These factors should not be treated as mutually exclusive explanations. A film addressing a public-health issue, for example, could simultaneously employ culturally familiar settings, use elders or family members to deliver information, and rely on dialogue because of limited production resources. The interviews thus provide contextual explanations for the content-analysis findings, although two selected accounts alone cannot establish how frequently each production factor shaped the entire corpus.

Wolfram (2026) encoding/decoding framework provides a useful theoretical basis for interpreting these findings. In this framework, media producers encode preferred meanings into media texts, while audiences interpret those texts through their own social and cultural frameworks. Early Kannywood filmmakers could encode moral judgments through explicit dialogue, the authority of elders, the consequences of particular actions, and the restoration of social order at the conclusion of a narrative. The prominence of explicit messaging in the content analysis suggests that many films made their preferred moral orientations relatively visible rather than leaving every judgment implicit.

The survey results indicate that the educational and verbal dimensions of these films remained salient in respondents' perceptions. The finding that 84% reported paying attention to dialogue and messaging, together with the same proportion recognising educational narrative techniques, is consistent with the interpretation that moral communication was a recognisable feature of the cinematic experience. Nevertheless, the survey does not demonstrate that viewers accepted the preferred meanings encoded by filmmakers. As Hall's framework emphasises, recognition and interpretation are not identical: viewers may accept a message, negotiate its meaning, or reject aspects of it. Without item-level data on agreement with particular moral messages, the present study cannot determine the extent to which respondents adopted these alternative interpretive positions.

The relationship between moral communication and cultural memory can also be understood through Assmann (2011) account of socially mediated cultural remembrance. Repeated representations of family responsibility, respect for elders, religious obligations,

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and community welfare may provide familiar narrative forms through which social norms are represented and recalled. Proverbs, elders' advice, and community-based conflict resolution can connect cinematic storytelling with forms of verbal and social practice that audiences may already recognise. When these conventions are incorporated into films, cultural meanings become part of a repeatable audiovisual narrative rather than remaining exclusively within face-to-face interaction.

This interpretation does not mean that the recurrence of moral narratives necessarily produces lasting cultural memory or behavioural change. The study measures the presence of moral and pedagogical features in films and respondents' reported attention to or recognition of those features. It does not directly measure long-term recall, changes in attitudes, the adoption of particular behaviours, or transmission of values between generations. The findings therefore support the conclusion that early Kannywood cinema represented and circulated normative expectations in a recognisable narrative form, but they do not establish the causal effects of these representations on audiences.

The findings demonstrate that moral communication and narrative pedagogy constituted important dimensions of early Kannywood cinema. Explicit messaging appeared in 75% of the analysed films, 55% received the highest score on the narrative pedagogic scale, and 30% depicted overt deviant behaviour according to the study's coding criteria. In the audience survey, 84% of respondents reported paying attention to dialogue and messaging, while the same proportion recognised the educational character of narrative techniques. The practitioner interviews further suggest that these patterns reflected a combination of cultural expectations, educational objectives, and practical production conditions. Taken together, the evidence indicates that early Kannywood cinema provided a medium through which moral and community values were dramatised and made available for audience interpretation. Its significance lies not simply in the presence of moral lessons, but in the interaction between narrative structure, verbal performance, social authority, and the institutional circumstances of filmmaking.

4.3. Audience Reception, Production Constraints, and the Persistence of Cinematic Conventions

The integration of content analysis, audience survey findings, and practitioner interviews demonstrates a convergence between the cultural and moral features represented in early Hausa films and the features recognised by contemporary respondents. Across the five reported survey indicators, agreement ranged from 84% to 90%. Specifically, 85% of respondents noticed filming locations, 84% paid attention to dialogue and messaging, 85% recognised traditional entertainment styles, 84% identified educational narrative techniques, and 90% associated earlier films with the promotion of Hausa cultural norms. These findings suggest that the cultural, performative, and moral dimensions of early Kannywood cinema remain salient within the perceptions of the surveyed undergraduate audience.

The approximate respondent counts make the distribution more tangible. Around 360 of the 400 respondents perceived earlier Hausa films as promoting Hausa cultural norms, while approximately 340 reported noticing filming locations and recognising traditional entertainment styles. Approximately 336 respondents reported paying attention to dialogue and messaging and recognising educational narrative techniques. These figures indicate that the reported patterns were not limited to a small minority of the surveyed students. However, the remaining percentages should be interpreted as respondents who did not fall within the combined agreement category, rather than

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automatically classified as respondents who disagreed. Depending on the original questionnaire and response distribution, this group may include neutral responses as well as disagreement.

Table 6 Audience Recognition of Cultural and Communicative Features in Early Kannywood Cinema

Audience indicator	Agreement (%)	Approximate number of respondents (N = 400)	Percentage not in the agreement category
Recognition of filming locations	85%	340	15%
Attention to dialogue and messaging	84%	336	16%
Recognition of traditional entertainment styles	85%	340	15%
Recognition of educational narrative techniques	84%	336	16%
Perception that earlier films promoted Hausa cultural norms	90%	360	10%

Source: Audience survey reported in the study. Respondent counts are calculated from the reported percentages and the sample size of 400.

Table 6 shows that perceived cultural promotion received the highest level of agreement, at 90%, followed by recognition of filming locations and traditional entertainment styles, both at 85%. Attention to dialogue and messaging and recognition of educational narrative techniques each reached 84%. The relatively narrow six-percentage-point range suggests that respondents recognised several complementary dimensions of early Kannywood cinema rather than identifying only one dominant feature. Cultural promotion, familiar settings, traditional performance, and educational storytelling were all reported as salient aspects of the films.

To understand the relationship between audience reception and cinematic representation, the survey results can be considered alongside the content-analysis findings presented in the preceding sections. The comparison reveals that the proportion of respondents recognising a feature was not necessarily equal to the proportion of films exhibiting a corresponding high-level characteristic.

Table 7 Comparison of Selected Film Characteristics and Audience Perceptions

Dimension	Content-analysis finding	Audience-survey finding	Interpretive implication
Cultural promotion	10 of 20 films (50%) received high scores on the cultural-promotion index	90% perceived earlier films as promoting Hausa cultural norms	Audience perceptions of cultural promotion extended beyond the proportion of films classified as high-scoring
Moral communication	15 of 20 films (75%) contained regular to high levels of explicit	84% reported paying attention to dialogue and	Explicit messaging was prominent in the selected films, while attention to

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Dimension	Content-analysis finding	Audience-survey finding	Interpretive implication
	messaging	messaging	messaging was also widely reported
Narrative pedagogy	11 of 20 films (55%) received the highest score on the narrative pedagogic scale	84% recognised the educational character of narrative techniques	Educational storytelling was recognised by a larger proportion of respondents than the proportion of films receiving the highest pedagogic score
Cultural settings	Domestic compounds appeared in 13 films (65%); marketplaces in nine (45%); religious spaces in four (20%)	85% reported noticing filming locations	Spatial representation was a prominent feature of the film corpus and a recognisable aspect of audience reception
Traditional performance	Qualitative analysis identified traditional costumes and oral-performative conventions	85% recognised traditional entertainment styles	The qualitative findings are consistent with audience recognition, although the study does not provide a separate numerical frequency for every performance convention

Source: Synthesis of the study's content-analysis, survey, and qualitative findings.

The comparison in Table 7 illustrates the value of integrating different sources of evidence. Content analysis identifies the occurrence and characteristics of representations within the selected films, whereas the survey captures respondents' perceptions of those films. Practitioner interviews provide further context for understanding why particular conventions were employed. The convergence among these sources strengthens the interpretation that cultural and moral communication was important to early Kannywood cinema. Nevertheless, convergence does not mean that the three methods measure the same phenomenon or independently prove the same causal process.

The difference between the cultural-promotion index and audience perceptions is particularly noteworthy. Half of the analysed films received high scores on the cultural-promotion index, while 90% of respondents associated earlier films with the promotion of Hausa cultural norms. This 40-percentage-point difference is descriptive rather than a measure of an individual-level association. The first percentage concerns the classification of 20 films; the second concerns the perceptions of 400 students. Because the study does not establish a direct film-by-film relationship between exposure and survey responses, the difference cannot demonstrate that viewers remembered particular scenes more strongly or that specific films generated the reported perceptions.

A more cautious interpretation is that cultural promotion was a salient overall characteristic of early Kannywood cinema in the surveyed audience's perceptions, even though only half of the selected films reached the highest reported category on the content-analysis index. Respondents may have formed their assessments from a range of cinematic experiences, including films outside the 20-title sample. Familiar domestic

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environments, traditional costumes, proverbial expressions, and scenes involving elders or family reconciliation may also contribute to viewers' understanding of the cultural character of these films. These are plausible interpretations of the findings, not independently measured explanations of the difference between the percentages.

The same distinction applies to moral communication and narrative pedagogy. Although 75% of the films contained regular to high levels of explicit messaging, 84% of respondents reported paying attention to dialogue and messaging. Similarly, 55% of films received the highest narrative pedagogic score, while 84% of respondents recognised the educational character of the narrative techniques. These findings are consistent with the interpretation that explicit dialogue and educational storytelling were recognisable features of early Kannywood cinema. They do not, however, demonstrate that every respondent encountered the same films, interpreted the messages in the same way, or retained the messages over an extended period.

4.4. Production Constraints and the Adaptation of Cinematic Form

Practitioner interviews reveal that the distinctive form of early Kannywood cinema was shaped partly by material and institutional circumstances. Limited budgets, restricted technological resources, and practical production demands encouraged filmmakers to rely on dialogue-centred scenes, familiar locations, theatrical staging, and relatively straightforward narrative structures. One practitioner explained that elaborate action sequences and special effects were difficult to achieve, making elders' conversations, family meetings, and proverbial conclusions practical alternatives (Interview Participant 5, Jos, June 2025). This account provides a production-level explanation for the narrative conventions identified in the study.

The interview suggests that dialogue-centred storytelling was not merely a stylistic preference detached from production conditions. Verbal exchanges, family discussions, and elders' interventions could communicate character motivations, establish moral conflicts, and move a story towards resolution without the technical demands associated with elaborate action sequences. Familiar social environments could also support the development of a narrative without requiring complex sets or extensive visual effects. Such choices were potentially compatible with both the material resources available to filmmakers and the cultural contexts represented in their stories.

At the same time, production constraints should not be treated as the sole explanation for the stylistic characteristics of early Kannywood cinema. The use of proverbs, expressive speech, familiar social roles, and community-based conflict resolution may also reflect established forms of oral performance and culturally recognisable narrative practices. Moreover, the practitioner interviews indicate that educational objectives could influence the content and delivery of dialogue. In some productions, verbal communication was therefore both a practical production strategy and a means of conveying intended social or educational messages.

The relationship between production constraints and cultural communication is particularly evident in the use of elders' conversations, family meetings, and proverbial conclusions. These devices could perform several functions simultaneously: they established authority, clarified competing expectations, and provided a means of resolving conflict. Their practical accessibility may have made them especially useful in resource-constrained productions, while their cultural familiarity could also make the narrative easier for audiences to interpret. However, the present study does not quantify how frequently each convention was selected because of budgetary limitations. The interview

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evidence supports a contextual explanation but cannot establish that the same constraint determined the stylistic choices of every film in the sample.

Table 8 Production Conditions, Cinematic Conventions, and Their Potential Functions

Production or cultural factor	Reported or observed feature	Potential function in the film narrative	Evidence base
Limited production resources	Reliance on dialogue-centred scenes and relatively straightforward staging	Communicate conflict and character motivation without elaborate visual effects	Practitioner interview and qualitative interpretation
Familiar social environments	Domestic compounds, marketplaces, and other recognisable settings	Situate stories within everyday social relationships	Content analysis and practitioner interview
Oral-performative conventions	Proverbs, expressive dialogue, songs, and ritualised interactions	Convey values and social meanings through familiar verbal and performative forms	Qualitative content analysis
Community authority	Elders' interventions and family meetings	Establish social expectations and facilitate narrative resolution	Practitioner interview and narrative interpretation
Educational objectives	Dialogue incorporating health and family-planning messages	Integrate public information into dramatic storytelling	Interview Participant 1, Kano, June 2025
Cultural expectations concerning appearance	Traditional garments and culturally meaningful costume choices	Signal identity, social position, and expectations of respectability	Qualitative content analysis and practitioner interview

Source: Synthesis of the reported findings and practitioner interviews.

Table 8 demonstrates that the cinematic conventions identified in the study can be understood through the interaction of production conditions, cultural practices, and communicative objectives. Limited resources may have encouraged filmmakers to adopt dialogue-centred storytelling, but dialogue was also useful for expressing values and explaining social conflicts. Likewise, traditional costumes and familiar settings could reduce the need for elaborate exposition while providing viewers with contextual cues about characters and relationships. The resulting filmic style can therefore be interpreted as an adaptation to the available production environment rather than as a direct reflection of technological limitations alone.

Domestication theory offers a useful perspective for interpreting the relationship between technology and cultural form. Pandey (2025) examines how media technologies become incorporated into everyday social and cultural practices. Applied cautiously to early Kannywood cinema, this perspective directs attention to how audiovisual production adapted existing forms of oral expression, familiar social interaction, and moral storytelling into recorded cinematic narratives. Rather than treating technological

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development and cultural tradition as opposing forces, this interpretation emphasises the ways media forms can be shaped by the social practices and resources within which they are produced and used.

In the selected films, the prominence of dialogue, gesture, costume, and recognisable communal spaces is consistent with the interpretation that audiovisual storytelling drew on established cultural resources. Cinematic representation enabled these practices to be arranged within a recorded narrative that could be circulated and encountered beyond the immediate context of a live performance or face-to-face interaction. Yet the available findings do not document the distribution history, viewing frequency, or household use of each film. The analysis can therefore discuss the cultural significance of mediated representation, but it cannot establish the precise extent to which particular films were incorporated into everyday routines or repeatedly viewed across generations.

The persistence of cinematic conventions should similarly be understood as a question of cultural recognisability rather than as proof of unchanged tradition. The survey finding that 85% of respondents recognised traditional entertainment styles indicates that these features remained identifiable to a substantial proportion of the surveyed students. The 84% agreement concerning educational narrative techniques and the 90% perception of cultural promotion further indicate that respondents associated early Hausa films with cultural and moral communication. These results support the view that early Kannywood cinema continues to possess a recognisable cultural identity within the surveyed group.

However, recognition of a convention does not establish that it remains unchanged in contemporary filmmaking or that every generation interprets it in the same way. A traditional performance style may be remembered positively, critically reinterpreted, or understood differently as social values and media technologies change. Likewise, recognition of a costume or familiar setting does not necessarily mean that audiences endorse every social expectation associated with it. The persistence of cultural conventions is therefore better conceptualised as an ongoing process of interpretation and negotiation than as the uninterrupted transmission of a fixed set of meanings.

Assmann (2011) cultural memory framework further helps explain why recurring cultural signs may remain significant within cinematic narratives. Cultural memory involves socially mediated representations through which selected elements of collective experience become available for remembrance and interpretation. Early Kannywood films presented recognisable social spaces, forms of address, clothing practices, and moral situations in repeatable audiovisual forms. These representations may serve as reference points through which audiences identify aspects of Hausa cultural life. Nevertheless, the present study measures reported recognition and perception rather than long-term recall, actual intergenerational transmission, or the cognitive mechanisms of memory. The relationship between cinematic convention and cultural memory should therefore be understood as a theoretically informed interpretation of the observed findings rather than a directly tested causal relationship.

Wolfram (2026) encoding/decoding framework also clarifies why the persistence of recognisable conventions does not imply uniform audience interpretation. Filmmakers may encode meanings through the use of traditional costumes, elders' advice, or moral resolutions, but viewers interpret these signs through their own experiences and social contexts. The high levels of reported recognition suggest that the selected cultural and narrative features were meaningful to many respondents. They do not demonstrate that all respondents accepted the intended moral message or interpreted the same sign

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identically. The distinction between recognition and acceptance is essential to avoid overstating the influence of early Kannywood cinema on contemporary audiences.

The combined findings provide a more integrated understanding of early Kannywood cinema as a medium of cultural representation and moral communication. Content analysis identifies the formal features through which cultural meanings and moral expectations were represented. Audience survey responses indicate which broad features remained recognisable to contemporary respondents, while practitioner interviews offer contextual explanations for the production choices and constraints associated with these films. Together, the three sources provide complementary perspectives on the relationship between cinematic form, cultural meaning, and audience perception.

Table 9 Triangulation of Research Findings

Research dimension	Principal evidence	Main contribution	Limitation
Film representation	Analysis of 20 early Hausa-language films	Identifies recurring cultural settings, explicit messaging, and pedagogical features	Findings are limited to the selected film corpus
Audience reception	Survey of 400 undergraduates from five universities in Kano State	Establishes reported recognition of cultural, moral, and educational features	Does not directly establish long-term recall, behavioural change, or national audience patterns
Production context	Interviews with 16 producers and directors from Kano, Kaduna, and Jos	Provides practitioner perspectives on cultural choices, educational objectives, and production constraints	Accounts are retrospective perspectives and do not establish the motivation behind every film
Integrated interpretation	Comparison of content analysis, survey, and interview findings	Identifies convergence among represented features, reported audience perceptions, and production explanations	Convergence does not establish causality or make the three forms of evidence interchangeable

Source: Integrated synthesis of the study's methods and findings.

Table 9 clarifies the contribution of methodological triangulation. The film sample establishes patterns within the selected titles, but it cannot represent every early Kannywood production. The student survey captures perceptions within a defined university-based population and should not automatically be generalised to all Hausa-speaking audiences. Practitioner interviews provide insight into production conditions and creative decisions, but retrospective accounts may not capture the full range of factors involved in the making of every film. The strength of the integrated analysis therefore lies in the complementary nature of the evidence rather than in treating all three sources as interchangeable measurements.

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These findings have implications for audiovisual heritage preservation. Archival initiatives should consider preserving complete films alongside contextual documentation concerning production dates, language, filmmakers, performers, narrative conventions, distribution, and the cultural settings represented. Such documentation would help future researchers examine how particular conventions changed across periods and how different audiences interpreted them. Where available, production notes, scripts, promotional materials, and oral histories from practitioners could complement the films themselves. The present study supports the value of preserving both audiovisual materials and their cultural context, although it does not directly evaluate existing archives or establish which preservation practices are currently most effective.

For contemporary Kannywood producers, early films may offer resources for developing narratives that retain cultural specificity while engaging with changing technologies and audience expectations. Familiar social environments, oral expression, and morally complex narratives can be adapted rather than reproduced uncritically. Contemporary productions may also reconsider how inherited conventions represent gender roles, authority, religious responsibility, and community expectations. Such an approach would recognise cultural continuity while allowing cinematic narratives to reflect social change and diverse audience interpretations.

Overall, the findings suggest that the significance of early Kannywood cinema extends beyond entertainment to include cultural representation, moral communication, and the preservation of recognisable narrative conventions. The survey indicates that between 84% and 90% of respondents recognised or reported attention to the selected cultural and communicative features. The content analysis demonstrates that explicit messaging and cultural-promotion features were present in substantial portions of the film sample, while practitioner interviews help explain how cultural practices, educational objectives, and material constraints interacted in shaping cinematic form. These findings support the interpretation that early Kannywood cinema provides a repertoire of cultural and communicative resources through which Hausa identity and social values can be represented and negotiated. Its legacy is best understood not as a fixed template or definitive proof of intergenerational transmission, but as a body of audiovisual narratives whose cultural meanings remain open to recognition, reinterpretation, and critical engagement.

4. Conclusion

This study examined early Kannywood cinema as a medium of cultural memory, moral communication, and audience reception within Hausa society. The findings from the content analysis of 20 early Hausa-language films demonstrate that cultural representation was constructed through familiar social environments, traditional costumes, oral-performative conventions, and community-based narratives. Domestic compounds appeared in 65% of the analysed films, while marketplaces appeared in 45%, indicating the prominence of everyday social spaces in cinematic storytelling. Furthermore, 75% of the films contained regular to high levels of explicit messaging, and 55% received the highest score on the narrative pedagogic scale. These findings suggest that early Kannywood cinema extended beyond entertainment by representing culturally recognisable experiences and incorporating moral and educational themes into narrative structures. Through the representation of family relationships, respect for elders, religious responsibilities, and community values, the films provided audiovisual forms through which aspects of Hausa cultural identity could be recognised and interpreted.

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The audience survey of 400 undergraduate students from five universities in Kano State further revealed that 85% of respondents noticed filming locations, 85% recognised traditional entertainment styles, 84% paid attention to dialogue and messaging, 84% recognised educational narrative techniques, and 90% associated earlier Hausa films with the promotion of Hausa cultural norms. These findings demonstrate the perceived salience of cultural and moral communication among the surveyed audience. Meanwhile, interviews with 16 film producers and directors from Kano, Kaduna, and Jos highlighted the influence of cultural expectations, educational objectives, and production constraints on early Kannywood filmmaking. Limited budgets and technological resources encouraged the use of dialogue-centred scenes, family meetings, elders' interventions, and proverbial expressions, while institutional priorities sometimes encouraged the inclusion of public-health and family-planning messages. Interpreted through cultural memory theory, encoding/decoding theory, and domestication theory, the findings suggest that early Kannywood cinema adapted familiar cultural practices and communicative conventions into audiovisual narratives. Nevertheless, audience recognition should not be equated with demonstrated behavioural change, long-term memory retention, or intergenerational cultural transmission.

This study contributes to the understanding of African and Hausa-language cinema by integrating textual representations, audience perceptions, and practitioners' perspectives within a single analytical framework. Its findings have practical implications for audiovisual heritage preservation, film scholarship, and contemporary Kannywood production. Preservation initiatives should document not only the films themselves but also their linguistic, historical, cultural, and production contexts. Contemporary filmmakers may also draw on inherited narrative conventions and oral traditions while critically adapting them to changing social realities, technological developments, and audience expectations. However, the findings should be interpreted within the boundaries of the selected film corpus, the university-based survey population, and the perspectives represented in the interviews. Future research could examine audience interpretations of specific films, compare different periods of Kannywood production, and investigate the relationship between cinematic exposure, cultural identification, and long-term memory through longitudinal or comparative designs. Ultimately, early Kannywood cinema is best understood as a cultural and communicative resource through which Hausa identity and community values are represented, interpreted, and continually renegotiated rather than preserved as an entirely fixed or unchanging tradition.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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