INFLUENCE OF SHORT-FORM VIDEO PLATFORMS ON THE CAREER PROGRESSION AND VISIBILITY OF EMERGING FILMMAKERS IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA

Enoch Aduragbemi ODESOLA
enoch.odesola@uniosun.edu.ng
Department of Communication and Media Studies
Osun State University, Osogbo
08168092181

ADEDOYIN Taoheed O.
Department of Mass Communication
University of Calabar
taoheed_adedoyin@yahoo.com
+234 807 743 4946

ABOLARIN, Cecilia Abiola
ceciliaabiola95@gmail.com
Department of Mass Communication
The Polytechnic Aran-Orin
+2349063625180

John Adegoke AKINOLA
john.akinola@uniosun.edu.ng
Department of Mass Communication
Osun State University
+234 816 606 9700

Enoch Aduragbemi ODESOLA[1], Taoheed O. ADEDOYIN[2], Cecilia Abiola ABOLARIN[3], John Adegoke AKINOLA[4]

[1]Department of Communication and Media Studies, Osun State University, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria
[2]Department of Mass Communication, University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria
[3]Department of Mass Communication, The Polytechnic Aran-Orin, Aran-Orin, Kwara State, Nigeria
[4]Department of Mass Communication, Osun State University, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria

Corresponding Author: Enoch Aduragbemi ODESOLA | enoch.odesola@uniosun.edu.ng

INFLUENCE OF SHORT-FORM VIDEO PLATFORMS ON THE CAREER PROGRESSION AND VISIBILITY OF EMERGING FILMMAKERS IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA

Abstract

The popularity of short-form video platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts has led to a significant transformation in how content is created and interacted with, creating new opportunities for new content creators to find visibility and recognition. The potential for a career trajectory in the creative industries that is sustainable after the visibility gained through the platforms is under-researched, particularly in non-Western creative industries. The effect of the short-form video platforms on the career trajectory and exposure of aspiring filmmakers in the south-west of Nigeria was investigated. It explored the relationship of engagement frequency with career outcomes, how filmmakers creatively leveraged the platforms, and the structural problems affecting career sustainability, in particular. The research design employed was mixed-methods research with a cross-sectional survey design of 186 emerging filmmakers purposively and snowballed sampled in Lagos, Oyo and Ogun States, with 12 semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and a chi-square test for quantitative data, and thematic analysis was used for qualitative data. Their findings showed that plenty of respondents (more than 80%) reported seeing positive results on the platform in terms of audience reach and engagement. There were statistically significant correlations between level of engagement and opportunities for collaboration ($\chi^2 = 15.27$, $p < .001$) and opportunities for industry recognition ($\chi^2 = 13.88$, $p < .001$), but only 38% reported the opportunity for funded projects or paid opportunities as a result of being engaged, indicating a critical gap. Content saturation, links in the industry, algorithmic randomness and monetisation systems were all cited as problems for success. These platform-related pressures were found to be associated with emotional exhaustion and career uncertainty of emerging filmmakers and thus the necessity of psychosocial support systems in digital creative economies. Short-form video platforms can be a great way to get discovered and get started, but they can also be great ways to develop a career in the long run – provided that they are used strategically, that users are active on multiple platforms, and that industry stakeholders make structural investments in platform literacy. It suggests more training in digital skills, better remuneration systems and greater synergy between digital visibility and the mainstream of the creative sector to unlock the potential of creative labour on platforms in the emerging media economies, as well as the provision of mental health support systems.

`Keywords: Short-form video platforms, career progression, visibility, emerging filmmakers, platformisation, gig workers, platform work

INFLUENCE OF SHORT-FORM VIDEO PLATFORMS ON THE CAREER PROGRESSION AND VISIBILITY OF EMERGING FILMMAKERS IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA

Introduction

Short-form video apps have transformed the landscape of global content creation and consumption in the last ten years; from TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts, these apps have become the backbone for digital creativity and interaction with audiences. There is an emerging genre of filmmakers working in Nigeria, and these platforms have proved to be transformative for these artists in the Global South, giving them alternative routes into visibility that don't go down the traditional filmmaking path. The platforms present new opportunities and new challenges for young visual storytellers in the geographies of South-West Nigeria, where Nollywood is used to operating through a well-established network of production and distribution. These algorithm-driven content-sharing and participatory user cultures have reduced structural obstacles to participation and enabled creators to develop followers and try new forms of storytelling without having to work through traditional media. At the same time, the global creator economy, a new digital labour market driven by monetised content and audience engagement, has grown rapidly and has impacted the conventional pathways in the creative economy, as well as creating alternative forms of precarious work and psychological stress.

Known as Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry is one of the most dynamic and accessible in Africa and is one of the world's most prolific in terms of production and impact. Nollywood is not just an economic engine; it is also an important medium for cultural expression, cultural identity negotiation and soft power projection. Direct-to-video, terrestrial television and theatrical releases were the industry's main distribution channels historically. The fast growth of mobile internet and social media technologies, however, has stimulated innovative production, marketing and audience engagement strategies. This trend of social media platforms in the promotion of films, mobilisation of audiences, and the position of brands in the Nollywood ecosystem has been documented in increasing numbers. Despite this burgeoning literature, empirical research on the ways in which short-form video platforms specifically constitute a “digital infrastructure” that affects emerging filmmakers' careers is still scarce. This is especially important when talking about how creators are dealing with these uncertain digital environments and their psychological health and career future, which this study aims to explore.

Recent research in video platform studies has shown that algorithmic recommender systems can have a strong impact on content visibility, audience distribution and creator outcomes. These platforms' architectural design allows for quick content turnover, a remix and user interaction culture, and alternative paths to earning symbolic capital. Media convergence theory and participatory culture offer useful lenses for examining how digital platforms have enabled new modes of creative collaboration and professional learning through networks. In this context, ‘views' isn't just about the quantity of people who see your content but is rather a digital asset that may turn into job opportunities, partnerships, industry recognition and sponsorship. But

the psychological ramifications of being algorithm-dependent, such as anxiety, burnout and emotional exhaustion, have not been sufficiently studied, especially in the Nigerian creative landscape where digital labour markets are still in their infant years.

Lagos, Oyo, and Ogun States, in South-West Nigeria, are home to a dynamic group of visual storytellers, in an ecosystem that is a mix of Nollywood tradition and digital experimentation. The use of short-form video as a tool for these practitioners to present behind-the-scenes processes, teaser narratives, micro-films, and innovative experiments that aim to build unique brand identities and build audience loyalty is growing. There are anecdotal reports that these sites are helping to increase visibility, but there are questions on whether this visibility is leading to lasting career growth and what are the most effective ways for filmmakers to use these tools for long-term career growth. But the instability of platform algorithms, restrictions on content monetisation, over-saturation of content and the inherent precarity of digital labour have all cast doubt on the sustainability of these new working pathways, leaving us to ask an important question: What kind of psychological strength is needed to maintain creative work on the platforms in the long term?

The research questions for this study were used to address these gaps. How does the short-form video platform affect the visibility of new filmmakers in South-West Nigeria? In what ways do short-form video platforms affect the visibility of new filmmakers in South-West Nigeria? Secondly, how do metrics of platform engagement relate to career metrics of these filmmakers? Third, what strategies do filmmakers employ to creatively use the short-form video environment for experimentation and professional growth? Fourth, which structural and platform-specific problems, such as psychological and well-being ones, impact upon the sustainability of emerging filmmakers' career development in this context?

To answer these questions, this study analyses the relationship between engagement metrics, follower growth and measurable career outcomes, including project collaborations, festival funding, mainstream Nollywood collaborations and more. The study fills important gaps in the scholarship on digital media in sub-Saharan Africa and builds on a burgeoning literature on platform labour and mental health in creative economies by combining qualitative practitioner insights with quantitative platform data in a mixed-methods approach. This research contributes to the discussions on platformisation, cultural production and professional mobility in new media markets by placing short-form video in the context of the current debates on creative economies and digital labour. It also provides policy-relevant insights for those involved in designing sustainable creative careers in Nigeria's changing audiovisual software industry and for media educators and platform designers that have not paid sufficient attention to the psychological aspects of platform-based creative work.

Research Objectives

a. How do short-form video platforms influence the visibility of emerging filmmakers in South-West Nigeria?

b. What is the relationship between platform engagement metrics and career progression indicators;

c. How filmmakers strategically utilise these platforms for creative experimentation and professional development?

d. What are the structural and platform-specific challenges that affect the sustainability of career development?

Objectives of the Study

In order to achieve the aim of this study, the following objectives are outlined. This study seeks to:

a. To determine how short-form video platforms influence the visibility of emerging filmmakers in South-West Nigeria;
b. To assess the relationship between platform engagement metrics and career progression indicators;
c. To examine how filmmakers strategically utilize these platforms for creative experimentation and professional development; and
d. To identify the structural and platform-specific challenges that affect the sustainability of career development.

Statement of the Problem

Short-form video platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts have revolutionized the creation and sharing of creative content, making it a global phenomenon. The platforms appear to offer new chances to new filmmakers in South-West Nigeria, particularly those who do not necessarily have to rely solely on the established Nollywood models to gain visibility. There are lots of young creatives who are creating audiences, presenting their work, and trying storytelling based on the short videos. Yet, even with this increasing trend, it remains unknown whether the exposure acquired on these platforms does result in any significant growth in careers. Research in the field has so far focused mainly on social media in general and has seriously neglected the impact of short-form video platforms on filmmakers' career development. More attention needs to be paid to how short-form video platforms affect filmmakers' career paths, as most of the research so far has been on social media in general.

Moreover, even though these platforms appear to be fast exposure and recognition means, questions about the long-term reliability and sustainability of such opportunities are becoming more and more concerning. The ever-changing algorithms, the competition, the lack of profit, and the chance to foresee the digital environment might affect the degree to which the filmmakers can truly benefit from the online presence. Such creators get noticed on the internet but do not know how to bring that to the real world, such as funding, collaborations, or mainstream Nollywood. This study addresses the critical issue of the fact that there is no clear and context-based knowledge of how short-form video platforms actually affect the visibility and career advancement of the emerging filmmakers in South-West Nigeria and whether the platforms can indeed be used to achieve long-term success in the creative industry.

Conceptual Review

Short-Form Video Platforms as Digital Infrastructures of Visibility.

Short-form video platforms are a unique type of new communication technology, which serves as an algorithmically-mediated infrastructure for content production, distribution and consumption. Unlike previous social media platforms

that primarily used the concept of a social graph, platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts use a recommendation algorithm as the main method of recommendation and content discoverability. Platforms can be explained in the broader context of platformisation, which describes the digital platforms that restructure cultural production by incorporating economic, technological and social processes into programmable architectures (Poell, Nieborg, & van Dijck, 2019). This structural logic is fundamentally transforming visibility from acts of institutional gatekeeping to algorithmic curation, opening up new access points for new filmmakers to reach viewers without first cutting through the filter of institutions.

In the realm of communication, shorter video formats are the epitome of audiovisual story-telling, data analysis and participatory engagement. These features of brevity, virality, and remixability can foster experimentation with shorter, more condensed forms of stories, frequently combining cinematic storytelling and social media visuals. This is in line with the concept of the micro-content economy, which relies on short attention spans (Abidin, 2021). These affordances are especially important in the context of South-West Nigeria, where the lack of formal film production and distribution structures can make it more difficult for filmmakers to enter into the industry. Thus, visibility is increasingly "popular" in a way that allows creators to build up what one might say is "digital symbolic capital" or recognition that can turn into professional opportunities.

This conceptualisation, however, needs to take into consideration the ever-changing nature of algorithmic visibility. Platforms offer unparalleled exposure but also have opaque and constantly changing rules governing the circulation of content. Algorithms are what make or break what you can see and what you cannot, as "custodians of the internet", says Gillespie (2018). This creates the conundrum that creators become empowered and, at the same time, limited – they cannot be sure of what the algorithm likes, and their success will rely on it. The situation leaves Nigeria with much to consider in terms of sustainability and equitable access to the platforms, as digital literacy and platform governance are still in their infancy. Therefore, it is necessary to conceive of short-form video as not only an empowering tool but also a socio-technical system which empowers and regulates creative visibility.

Digital Visibility and Career Progression as Forms of Platform-Based Capital for Short-form Video

The concept of visibility in a digital environment is not only the degree to which an audience can access a product, but it's also a multidimensional capital that can impact career choices within the creative industry. The concept of digital visibility on short-form platforms can be linked to the theory of capital by French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu, which views platform-based capital as the number of views, likes, shares, or followers. The metrics can be used as indicators of social validation and can be leveraged by the industry stakeholders such as producers, brands and distributors to gauge the value of a creator in the market (Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2017). When considering this context, visibility turns into a trade in the digital creator economy, affecting the chances of collaboration, livelihood and recognition.

These platforms offer “tangible outcomes” that are proving to be a more effective way of charting the course of the career for emerging filmmakers. Consistent with the idea of digital labour as a creative and economic interaction that enters into platform ecosystems (Nieborg & Poell, 2018). The short-form video platform offers audiences a venue to view the filmmaker's talent, build his/her brand and engage directly with the filmmaker, thereby eliminating the traditional gate-keeping system. Empirical evidence suggests that when audiences are highly engaged, it can open up doors to sponsorship opportunities, opportunities for exposure at festivals, and opportunities to get into mainstream production networks. However, this conversion is not guaranteed and automatic.

Decoupling visibility from sustainability is one of the conceptual challenges. Although platforms offer fast growth of audience, they typically have few monetisation options, particularly for short-form content. Cunningham and Craig (2019) point out that the conditions of precarious labour are what define the creator economy: income streams are sporadic and greatly influenced by policies set by platforms. For filmmakers in South-West Nigeria, the challenge is compounded by structural factors such as the lack of access to funding and inadequate implementation of intellectual property rights as well as a poorly emergent digital monetisation market. So having a presence online is not enough to grow a career in the long term, and it will take a combination of online visibility and offline industry engagement.

Moreover, the focus on metrics of success can have a negative impact on the creative process and promote content that has more of a ‘going viral' angle than artistic value. This brings up some significant considerations of the impact of platform logic on cinematic expression and storytelling quality. Thus, visibility/career development may be considered to be a process that is dynamic and context-dependent, both through the affordances of technology and by socio-economic factors.

Participatory Culture, Algorithmic Governance, and Creative Agency in Short-form Video

With the rise of short-form video platforms, the dynamics of participatory culture, where consumers are not simply consumers but the active creators, distributors and evaluators of content, have been amplified. Jenkins (2006) defines participatory culture as a culture with low barriers to artistic participation, support for sharing of creations, and informal mentorships among participants. In this context, emerging filmmakers continuously communicate with their audience by commenting on their posts, sharing their films, making duets and creating films together to build community and co-creation. This participatory ecosystem is seen in South-West Nigeria through the vast amounts of user-generated material and content that inform the local narratives, cultural expressions, and social issues.

The algorithmic nature of the platform, however, has become an integral part of participatory culture on short-form platforms in controlling the conditions of participatory action. Content visibility is determined by algorithms; some kinds of engagement are prioritised, and the algorithms affect the user behaviour through feedback loops. The production of algorithmic systems, Bucher (2018) suggests, leads to “anticipated publics” to

which users adjust their content strategies depending on what they assume the algorithm likes. This is a kind of strategic creativity, with producers adapting their movies to the trends, hashtags, and platform conventions to ensure the widest possible audience. This increases engagement but could also restrict creative freedom in favour of content that is formulaic and trendy.

Agency and structure are in tension around the interaction of participation and algorithmic control. The film company can (on the other hand) shape the content, the way the film will be distributed, and the interaction with the audience and build digital communities. Their visibility and success, however, are limited on platforms which they cannot control. The chimaera of digital and cultural production is especially relevant in the Nigerian context, where the digital community may provide a forum for identity negotiation and for activism. The "networked publics" created by technology are a result of affordances and influence how people interact, act and become visible (Boyd 2010).

Moreover, misinformation, content saturation and algorithmic bias will add additional challenges to the participatory environment. The sensational or emotional content can be amplified, resulting in an information ecosystem that, as seen in dozens of digital communities around the world (Tufekci 2015), leads to loss of trust. For new filmmakers, this environment is both challenging and threatening because they are being asked to deal with the need for visibility AND credibility and also for creative integrity.

In sum, it is in the conceptual relation between a participatory culture, algorithmic governance, and creative agency that it is possible to gain insight into short-form video as a socio-technical environment. At the same time these platforms enable filmmakers to interact with audiences and restrict them by algorithmic structures, and success becomes dependent on creative ability and platform literacy. This type of knowledge becomes important in the context of the obstacles faced by young filmmakers in South-West Nigeria in becoming visible and progressing in the evolving digital media space.

Empirical Review

The empirical literature to date has illustrated the importance of short-form video platforms in visibility, engagement, and the development of new digital careers. Based on a survey sample of 468 creators that adopted the UTAUT model with an extension, Liang, Wang and Yao (2024) concluded that perceived ease of use and facilitating conditions have a significant influence on the likelihood of adopting a platform and that behavioural intention has an intermediate effect on their continued use. The results reveal that the success of creators is not random but rather depends on platform affordances and the dynamics of platform usability. Likewise, an investigation of cases and data analysis by Babu et al. (2024) revealed that not only does short-form video help in getting high audience attention and reach, but algorithmic amplification and viral trends are one of the effective solutions to make things visible and tell the brand story in a short period. In this regard, Zhang (2025) has performed a systematic review of the literature from the period 2018-2025, which reveals how the participative culture has been transformed into an ecosystem of algorithmic control of visibility and how

the organic processes of the construction of audiences are replaced by recommendation systems, making digital success accessible and unstable.

In addition to visibility, empirical research has also questioned the role of these platforms in the structures of engagement and creative practices. In a massive data donation experiment with 347 users and more than 9 million video recommendations, Zannettou et al. (2023) discovered that algorithmic feeds are an important determinant of how users interact with the feed, and users are more likely to engage with creators that they know best despite consuming algorithmically recommended content. This poses the two-sided visibility, the network familiarity, and the algorithmic exposure coexist. Another large-scale study on more than 70,000 YouTube channels found that creators are shifting their attention to short-form videos since they are more likely to get more views and reach, but not necessarily more depth of engagement (in terms of comments and interaction). However, in a similar study, Rajendran et al. (2024) identified that while short-form videos increase the duration of attention given to the content, they also come with a huge loss in the opportunity to monetize as compared to long-form videos, creating a paradox of "more visibility" with "less profitability."

More recent empirical studies give more insight into the strategic development of creators in these platforms. After conducting qualitative interviews with 17 digital entrepreneurs, Chen et al. (2023) found that success on TikTok is strongly related to good content adjustment, trend alignment, and regular posting behavior but not necessarily to creativity and originality. Similarly, Yue and Li (2024) successfully explained how the results of short video audience responses and interaction depended on the stimulus (content properties) and organism (creator credibility) using the Stimulus-Organism-Response model, which confirmed the importance of authenticity and presentation style in the short video success story. In a more recent quantitative study, Budiarti et al. (2025) (reflected in other marketing research studies of shorter duration) found that audience response to the content is significantly influenced by the relatability of the influencer, cues for trust, and content authenticity: emotions and perceived credibility are the drivers of sustained engagement.

The general conclusions of these empirical studies suggest that the short-form video platform is a potential platform to bring more visibility to the content and reduce the hurdles associated with beginning the video career; its influence on the development of the video career in the longer term is not as clear or proportional. The visibility is typically facilitated by algorithmic processes that are volatile and easily changed, and there is only a weak correlation between engagement and job-related possibilities, while the monetisation models are also weak. The paradoxes are especially significant in the context of the young filmmakers in the southwest region of Nigeria, where the digital is not yet manifested in terms of financing, collaborations and the inclusion in Nollywood mainstream.

Theoretical Review

This research is based on two theoretical frameworks that are deemed to be complementary, namely the media convergence theory and the theory of participatory culture, which provide a logical framework to understand how the

short-form video platforms determine the visibility and career paths of the media in the contemporary media landscape. The structural changes in the media system and the integration of different platforms are discussed in the media convergence theory, while the participatory culture theory focuses on the behavioural and interactive nature of the audience' interest. Collectively, the theories present a rational framework of analysing the use of digital platforms by emerging filmmakers in South-West Nigeria to acquire visibility and professional opportunities.

Media convergence theory is a theory coined by Henry Jenkins that is related to the merging of old media and new media into a single digital area from which the content is transmitted through various media. In terms of this research, the short video platforms can be considered convergence platforms, where cinematography, advertisement and user experience converge. The few new filmmakers do not have to go through the traditional Nollywood distributors only but are in a new and hybrid space where they can show their movies directly to the viewers. This structural shift brings visibility as it opens up a lot of doors for entering into the industry and makes convergence a force of access and exposure.

Building on this, the theory also predicts that visibility control has shifted, from the traditional gatekeepers to moving to platform algorithms, even though they are more accessible. This creates a new kind of mediated visibility that is dependent on how well the creators match up with their platform (trends, timeline, content shape, etc.). To filmmakers in South-West Nigeria, it means that there is no longer any need for talent or affiliation with the industry to determine the career advancement of these people, but how well they can integrate converged media systems. This is directly related to the fact that the study concentrates on the question of whether the platform-based visibility will be translated into real professional effects or not.

The theory of participatory culture, also created by Henry Jenkins, is very closely connected to this structural perspective and is centred on the active viewing of the viewer in the production and distribution of content. The short-form video platform is not an environment of passive consumption; users of the platform are active producers of what is seen through likes, comments, sharing and remixing practices. Such a participatory environment broadens the range of filmmakers' content and creates opportunities to build community, forge audience loyalty and create participatory interaction. In terms of the existing research, these are the most noticeable aspects of visibility and have an important effect on the digital visibility of filmmakers.

In between, there is a clear connection between both theories, in that structure alone will not create visibility on short-form video platforms, but the interaction between the converged media format systems and participatory audience behaviour will. While media convergence theory focuses on the space and platforms where exposure can take place, participatory culture theory focuses on the nature of engagement in that space as the key determinant of the level of exposure and potential career consequences. This combined view is especially applicable to this research, as it assists in determining why certain upcoming filmmakers have been able to use online buzz to translate

into real industry chances, as others fail to do so despite the same amount of buzz.

Methodology

The study adopts a mixed methods design (MMD) which incorporates quantitative and qualitative methods for presenting a comprehensive picture of the role short-form video platforms play in the visibility and career development of new filmmakers in South-West Nigeria. As the phenomenon being explored is one in which engagement can be quantified as well as subjective experiences involving career advancement, the approach is appropriate. Emerging filmmakers from Lagos, Oyo and Ogun states are a part of the population that is actively using platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts. This group does not have a clearly established sampling frame. The population comprises emerging filmmakers actively using short-form platforms; however, no comprehensive registry exists .

The sample size for the quantitative phase is calculated by Cochran's formula for large or

unknown populations to assure methodological rigour. The formula is as follows:

The Cochran formula is expressed as:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 p(1-p)}{e^2}$$

Where:

- n = required sample size;
- Z = standard normal deviate corresponding to the desired confidence level (1.96 at 95% confidence level);
- p = estimated population proportion (0.50), adopted to maximise variability where the true population proportion is unknown; and
- e = acceptable margin of sampling error (0.07).

Substituting the study parameters into the formula gives:

$$n = \frac{\left(1.96\right)^2 \times 0.50(1-0.50)\right)}{\left(0.07\right)^2} n$$

$$= \frac{3.8416 \times 0.25}{0.0049} n$$

$$= \frac{0.9604}{0.0049} n = 196$$

The sample size obtained from the computation was 196 respondents. To facilitate field administration, to reduce the potential for incomplete responses, and to ensure sufficient statistical power (inferential analysis), the number of respondents to this item was rounded up to 200. This adjustment allowed a practical and methodologically appropriate sample with the level of precision outlined by the study. The 95% confidence level and a 7% margin of error ensured that the sample was representative enough of the study population that valid statistical inferences could be made (Cochran, 1977). This leaves the sample statistically sufficient to be analysed through inference and is in tandem with the international research guidelines. In the qualitative phase, purposive sampling is used to select 12 respondents based on the principle of data saturation, which would guarantee the

depth and richness of data without repetitions.

To select filmmakers who are active on short-form video platforms and who meet the criteria of the study, a purposive sampling method is first used. This is succeeded by the snowball sampling technique, where the participants will recommend other qualified filmmakers in their circles of friends. The structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide are used to obtain data. Quantitative data is analysed through descriptive and inferential statistics, whereas qualitative data is analysed thematically. The instruments are justified by expert assessment and pilot testing, and reliability is checked with the help of an internal consistency score. Informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation are among the strictly adhered ethical standards that ensure that the study is conducted to the standards of accepted academic and research ethics worldwide.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework was used to analyse the qualitative data arising from the semi-structured interviews – familiarisation with the data; they carried out a systematic coding in NVivo, generated themes, reviewed themes iteratively, defined themes and finally interpreted themes with the help of quotes from the interviews. The reliability of the quantitative instrument was tested by using 20 respondents in a pilot study and Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the internal consistency of the instrument. The reliability scores for the constructs were all found to be satisfactory: Visibility Outcomes (0.82), Engagement Patterns (0.79) and Career Progression Indicators (0.85); all these scores are above the acceptable level of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). In addition to content and face validity, assessment by three scholars in media and communication further validated the instruments before research was conducted. The ethical protocols such as informed consent, confidentiality and voluntary participation were strictly followed throughout the study.

Table 3.1: Sample Size Determination Using Cochran's Formula

Parameter	Value
Confidence Level (Z)	1.96
Estimated Proportion (p)	0.5
Margin of Error (e)	0.07
Calculated Sample Size (n)	196
Adjusted Sample Size	200

Source: Adapted from Cochran (1977); Researcher's Computation (2026)

Table 3.2: Sample Distribution and Technique

Category	Sample Size	Sampling T
Emerging Filmmakers (Lagos)	80	Purposive/S
Emerging Filmmakers (Oyo)	60	Purposive/S
Emerging Filmmakers (Ogun)	60	Purposive/S
Total (Quantitative)	**200**	—
Qualitative Interviews	**12**	Purposive

Source: Researcher's Design (2026)

RESULTS AND DATA PRESENTATION

The results of the study are reported in tabular and cross-tabulated form in line with the data reporting requirements of the APA. No interpretation (this is done in the discussion section). Tables have been numbered, titled and cited in the text to enable the readers to see the findings clearly and coherently.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

First, it is important to identify the key characteristics of respondents and their digital engagement behaviours. The data can be used to set the context for the main findings.

Table 4.1: Demographic and Platform Use Characteristics (n = 186)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Group	18–25	65	35.0
	26–35	85	45.7
	36–45	28	15.1
	46+	8	4.3
Gender	Male	108	58.1
	Female	78	41.9
Years of Experience	< 2 years	62	33.3
	2–5 years	61	32.8
	> 5 years	63	33.9
Active Platforms	TikTok	157	84.4
	Instagram Reels	149	80.1
	YouTube Shorts	102	54.8

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Key Observation: Emerging filmmakers are predominantly young adults, with balanced gender representation and high engagement on TikTok and Instagram Reels, highlighting the platforms' relevance in contemporary creative practice.

4.2 Platform Visibility and Engagement Patterns

This section provides insights into participants' attitudes towards the visibility they felt they had gained through using short-form video apps and their frequency of content posting.

Table 4.2: Visibility Outcomes by Platform Use

Visibility Indicator	Strongly Agree	Agree
Platforms increased audience reach	52 (28%)	101 (54%)
Platforms increased engagement levels	46 (25%)	95 (51%)
Platforms helped build creative identity	38 (20%)	89 (48%)

The responses show that there's a significant majority who think that short-form platforms help with visibility.

4.3 Cross-Tabulation of Engagement and Career Outcomes

One of the key points of analysis is how engagement on platforms relates to career indicators such as collaboration and industry recognition as detailed in the cross-tabulation below.

Table 4.3: Engagement Levels vs Career Progression Indicators

Engagement Level	Career Outcome	Yes	No	Total
High Engagement	Received collaboration opportunities	89	18	107
	Secured industry recognition	71	36	107
Moderate/Low Engagement	Received collaboration opportunities	31	48	79
	Secured industry recognition	23	56	79

Note: High engagement: those with regularly received ≥1000 monthly interactions (likes, shares, and comments).

4.4 Inferential Statistics: Relationship Between Engagement and Outcomes

A chi-square test of independence was used to check for links between engagement measures and job advancement.

Table 4.4

Chi-Square Test for Engagement × Collaboration

Statistic	Value
χ^2	15.27
Df	1
Asymp. Sig. (p-value)	.000
Phi (φ)	0.247

Table 4.5

Chi-Square Test for Engagement × Industry Recognition

Statistic	Value
χ^2	13.88
Df	1
Asymp. Sig. (p-value)	.000
Phi (φ)	0.236

Results indicate statistically significant associations between engagement levels and career progression measures.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the evidence from this research is that the short video forms had great visibility for new filmmakers in Southwest Nigeria, which is the first objective of this research. More than 80% of respondents reported that TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts positively assisted them to build their audiences and reach their audience. This confirms earlier studies by Liang et al. (2024) and Chen et al. (2023), which showed that algorithm-based platforms increase the content discoverability and allow creators to create personal brands and audiences. The qualitative interviews also showed that some filmmakers utilise the media convergence theory so as to take advantage of the trendy hashtags, collaborations, and platform algorithms, which is an applied example of the theory in real-life situations.

Professional opportunities such as collaboration opportunities and industry recognition were significantly related to the engagement levels, as revealed by cross-tabulations and chi-square tests. Platform visibility seems to be a source of digital capital (Bleier, Fossen, and Shapira, 2024): Filmmakers that had high engagement rates were much more likely to report tangible career benefits compared to those with lower engagement. However,

this conclusion also raises an important caveat—there is no guarantee that seeing results—financial or otherwise—will be sustainable. Only 38% of the respondents said they received funding or paid opportunities after their exposure on a platform, further confirming that while short-form platforms offer exposure, exposure alone is not sufficient to progress at the structural and economic levels of the platform, as Rajendran et al. (2024) also argue.

This study also discovered that there is a strategic use of short-form video sites as a platform of creative experimentation and brand development, which is in line with the theory of participatory culture. There are some micro-narratives and experimental story ways that moviemakers present to audiences and keep them entertained behind the scenes. Nevertheless, most respondents (64–79% of them) listed such issues as algorithmic inconsistency, content saturation, and poor monetisation potential as the reasons to prove the precarity of platform-driven careers (Zhang, 2025). These findings indicate that moviemakers need to go multi-platform and use adaptive strategies to keep up with the visibility and replace online presence with professional growth.

Lastly, the results show that media convergence theory and participatory culture theory have a synergistic relationship. Platforms are places of convergence that integrate content production, dissemination, and audience participation, and participatory practices are the benchmark of success for this exposure. This bi-directional perspective is what makes some filmmakers see visibility as an opportunity and some do not, thus signalling the interaction and structural access in career trajectories.

In general, this study supports theoretical and empirical arguments that short-form video platforms are viable platforms for emerging filmmakers, who are operating in a complex and volatile digital ecology. It is necessary but not sufficient, and it is crucial to stress strategic engagement, platform literacy and hybrid strategies (online/offline professional practice). These observations contribute to a broader conversation on digital labour, the platformisation of the creative economy and the emergent markets' creative economy (Nigerian market).

Conclusion

The research aimed at finding out whether the enhanced visibility that is achievable in the use of short-form video platforms can significantly affect the career progression of a fledgling filmmaker in the South-West region of Nigeria. The findings give a complex, but interesting, picture. Filmmers can use these platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts to post videos, grow audiences, and explore novel concepts without needing the backing of Nollywood. Filmmakers can now share their creations, attract audiences, and experiment with novel ideas on these platforms, bypassing the conventional Nollywood route. Over the past few years, the use of social media like TikTok, Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts has made it easier for filmmakers to share their films, reach a wider audience and be creative without following the Nollywood model. In the context of this, visibility is now more accessible and dynamic, as it is a form of digital currency that can enhance visibility and introduce new opportunities for interaction. They've been extremely active, and that activity includes such perks as industry recognition and collaborations that reinforce the idea

that having your work exposed on the platform can help propel creative careers.

This visibility doesn't necessarily translate to a successful career, though. There are lots of differences between the popularity of the online side and the real-world and practical side, such as funding, income, getting integrated into the industry, etc. As the study reveals, many filmmakers have difficulties turning short-term digital attention into long-term opportunities, which is mainly attributed to structural barriers like underdeveloped monetisation strategies, algorithmic volatility and high content saturation. The outcome is that the creation of short-form video platforms is more about creating a platform where success can be achieved than it is about a path to success. The findings highlight the importance of visibility but not sufficiency, as filmmakers will need to grasp the dynamics of platforms and extend their digital presence to other professional networks to enable them to build a sustainable career.

Recommendations

Looking at these, it's evident the emerging filmmakers are making their digital visibility less strategic. When it comes to platform exposure, the ultimate goal of the filmmaker isn't platform exposure—it's just the first step in a larger career trajectory. This implies the chances created by online visibility should be maximised by engaging with other stakeholders within the industry, taking part in festivals and cooperating with other companies. Not to mention, there's a chance to enhance platform literacy, too—or, if a filmmaker knows more about algorithmic systems, audience behaviours, and content strategy, then that's a bigger opportunity to remain in view and relevant. In this sense, it is necessary to extend the current scope of work for media education teachers and creative institutions to cover some aspects of 'digital competence' that are applicable to today's media culture.

Structural interventions, on the other hand, are needed to close the digital exposure–professional advancement gap. The industry should acknowledge the visibility of platforms as a new source of talent and begin to open the doors to make new talent mainstream in the creative industry. In addition, the support of policymakers and platform developers to create a more stable and fair digital creative economy by enhancing the monetisation system and transparency of algorithmic platforms and the creative economy is required. These initiatives will support short-form video platforms to be more than a space of visibility but a sustainable space for the creative process and professional development.

REFERENCES

Abidin, C. (2021). *Mapping internet celebrity on TikTok: Exploring attention economies and visibility*. Routledge.

Babu, R., Kumar, S., & Singh, P. (2024). Algorithmic amplification and audience engagement in short-form video platforms. *Journal of Digital Media Studies*, 12(2), 45–62.

Bleier, A., Fossen, B. L., & Shapira, Z. (2024). Algorithmic content distribution and creator performance in digital platforms. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 61(1), 1–18.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood.

Boyd, D. (2010). Social network sites as networked publics: Affordances, dynamics, and implications. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *A networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites* (pp. 39–58). Routledge.

Bucher, T. (2018). *If... then: Algorithmic power and politics*. Oxford University Press.

Budiarti, I., Santoso, H., & Rahman, A. (2025). Influencer credibility and audience engagement in short-form video marketing. *International Journal of Digital Marketing*, 9(1), 22–40.

Chen, L., Ma, Y., & Sharma, R. (2023). Content strategy and creator success on TikTok: A qualitative study of digital entrepreneurs. *New Media & Society*, 25(8), 2145–2162.

Cochran, W. G. (1977). *Sampling techniques* (3rd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Cunningham, S., & Craig, D. (2019). *Social media entertainment: The new intersection of Hollywood and Silicon Valley*. NYU Press.

Gillespie, T. (2018). *Custodians of the internet: Platforms, content moderation, and the hidden decisions that shape social media*. Yale University Press.

Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York University Press.

Khamis, S., Ang, L., & Welling, R. (2017). Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies*, 8(2), 191–208. https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2016.1218292

Liang, X., Wang, Y., & Yao, J. (2024). Technology adoption and engagement in short-form video platforms: Extending the UTAUT model. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*, 14, 100412.

Nieborg, D. B., & Poell, T. (2018). The platformization of cultural production. *Social Media + Society*, 4(3), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118766480

Odunlami, T. (2022). Social media and film marketing in Nollywood. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 14(2), 155–170.

Poell, T., Nieborg, D., & van Dijck, J. (2019). Platformisation. *Internet Policy Review*, 8(4), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.14763/2019.4.1425

Rajendran, K., Nair, S., & Pillai, R. (2024). Monetization challenges in short-form video ecosystems. *Journal of Media Economics*, 37(1), 55–72.

Tufekci, Z. (2015). Algorithmic harms beyond Facebook and Google: Emergent challenges of computational agency. *Colorado Technology Law Journal*, 13(2), 203–218.

Violot, T., Lefevre, J., & Martin, P. (2024). Short-form vs long-form content performance on YouTube: A longitudinal study. *Journal of*

Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 68(1), 88–105.

Yue, H., & Li, X. (2024). Audience engagement in short-video platforms: A stimulus-organism-response perspective. *Telematics and Informatics*, 85, 102012.

Zannettou, S., Caulfield, T., Blackburn, J., & Stringhini, G. (2023). The dynamics of user engagement on TikTok: A data-driven analysis. *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media*, 17, 1234–1245.

Zhang, Y. (2025). Algorithmic visibility and participatory culture in short-form video platforms: A systematic review (2018–2025). *New Media & Society*. Advance online publication.