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AI and Emerging Technologies in Nollywood: An Exploration of *Love in Every Word* (2025)

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Abstract

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies is redefining global filmmaking and Nollywood, the world's second-largest film industry, is no exception. Thus, this paper examines their influence on Nollywood, using the case study of *Love in Every Word* (2025), a romantic thriller. Through a qualitative methodology and content analysis approach, this study explores how AI tools and digital-first strategies are transforming independent film production and distribution in Nigeria. It utilizes the theory of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). The findings reveal that AI-assisted editing, social media marketing, and YouTube-based distribution played a significant role in the film's success, helping it reach over 25 million views and generating significant online interaction. Although other emerging and advanced technologies, such as blockchain and Virtual Reality, were not used, the film's success highlights how low-budget, tech-assisted production can achieve a broad cultural impact. The study concludes that AI serves not as a creative replacement but as a democratizing force, allowing filmmakers to bypass traditional barriers and connect directly with their audiences.

Keywords: Nollywood, Artificial Intelligence, Emerging Technologies, Film Production, Love in Every Word, Nigerian Cinema, Digital Filmmaking

Introduction

The Nigerian film industry, popularly known as Nollywood, has long held a distinctive place in global cinema, known for its prolific output. Over the past three decades, it has transitioned from low-budget, direct-to-video productions to a more structured and globally recognized industry, contributing significantly to Nigeria's cultural and economic identity.

The evolution of cinema in Nigeria can be traced back to the early 20th century, when film exhibitions laid the foundation for the vibrant film culture that exists today. Although the first screenings were largely for entertainment, they were also employed by colonial administrators as tools for spreading British ideals and justifying imperial rule (Azeez, 2019). Notably, film made its Nigerian debut in 1903 at Lagos's Glover Memorial Hall, years

before Nigeria became a unified colony, with *Palaver* recognized as one of the first films produced locally. In the decades that followed, film evolved into more than just entertainment; it became a vehicle for communication, education, and cultural preservation (Enahoro, 1989). The initial success of cinema exhibitions attracted not only private entrepreneurs, such as Herbert Macaulay, but also the colonial authorities, who began producing films during World War II through the Colonial Film Unit (CFU). The CFU aimed to promote colonial interests, encourage local development, and shape perceptions of British governance (Ekwuazi, 1991).

Over the past decade, however, Nollywood has entered a new phase of transformation driven by technological advancement. From the adoption of digital technology in cinematography and editing software to the more recent embrace of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in scripting, budgeting, casting, and distribution analytics, emerging technologies are reshaping the aesthetic, economy, and creativity of Nigerian filmmaking. The technological journey of cinema has seen remarkable shifts, from silent films to sound, black-and-white to colour, and analogue to high-definition digital formats. Modern advancements have introduced ultra-high-definition technologies such as 2K, 4K, and 8K resolutions, which have expanded creative possibilities and elevated audience expectations (Wellington, 1985). These developments have paved the way for even more revolutionary changes, including the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into the filmmaking process. AI is increasingly being explored as a means to optimize various stages of film production. It offers tools that can enhance efficiency in preproduction, editing, marketing, and audience analytics, ultimately reducing costs and production time (Husnain, 2023).

In recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) has begun to assume more creative roles in filmmaking, expanding beyond its traditional use as a tool for technical tasks. A key moment happened in 2016, when two projects showcased AI's potential in filmmaking. The first was the trailer for the sci-fi film *Morgan*, which was created by IBM's supercomputer Watson. The second was *Sunspring*, a short film written entirely by an AI called Benjamin. While these projects did not produce perfect films, they marked an important step, demonstrating that AI can assist with creative processes such as scriptwriting and editing, areas once considered strictly human territory (Husnain, 2023).

As technological innovation reshapes global film industries, Nollywood is increasingly embracing digital tools and artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance production quality, storytelling, distribution, and audience engagement. Artificial Intelligence and emerging technologies, ranging from machine learning algorithms to virtual reality, CGI, automated editing systems, and data-driven marketing strategies, are now being integrated into various aspects of filmmaking. These tools have begun to influence everything from pre-production tasks such as script development and casting, to post-production processes like colour grading, sound design, and digital effects. Globally, major studios have leveraged AI to predict audience preferences, generate promotional content, and even simulate actor performances. Nollywood, although still developing its technical infrastructure, is gradually aligning with these innovations to remain competitive in a fast-evolving media ecosystem.

Nollywood plays a major role in Nigeria's economy and is one of the country's largest employers, providing direct and indirect jobs to over a million people (Obiaya, 2011). This makes it essential to understand how artificial intelligence (AI) could affect the industry. This paper therefore, aims to contribute to ongoing scholarly conversations (Ijikelly, Oluseye, & Fatonji, 2024; Itanyi, 2024; Obiora & Adikuru, 2024) on the business of filmmaking in Nigeria by examining how artificial intelligence and emerging technologies

are reshaping Nollywood's creative and industrial processes using *Love in Every Word* (2025) as a case study.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) propounded by Davis (1986). TAM is widely used to understand and predict how users come to accept and use new technologies. The theory is grounded in social psychology, particularly the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), which posits that human behaviour is influenced by beliefs that shape attitudes, which then affect intentions and ultimately behaviour. TAM identifies two key constructs, perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) that determines an individual's attitude toward using a technology. Perceived usefulness refers to the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system will enhance their job performance, while perceived ease of use reflects the degree to which the person believes that using the system will be free of effort. These perceptions influence the user's behavioural intention to adopt the technology, leading to actual acceptance and use (Davis, 1989).

Applying TAM to this study, the acceptance of artificial intelligence (AI) in the Nigerian film industry largely depends on how filmmakers perceive the usefulness and ease of use of AI technologies. For instance, AI-driven tools that assist in script analysis, budgeting, and other pre-production activities offer practical benefits by improving efficiency and accuracy, which aligns with perceived usefulness. Simultaneously, if these tools are user-friendly and seamlessly integrate into existing workflows, filmmakers are more likely to adopt them, reflecting perceived ease of use (Ghiassi & Moon, 2015). Therefore, TAM provides a framework for examining how AI technology can be effectively integrated into Nollywood to enhance film production processes and ultimately improve industry outcomes.

Synopsis of *Love in Every World* (2025)

> *Love in Every Word* (2025) is a romantic thriller from Omoni Oboli TV in collaboration with Quantum Leap Production. Directed by Stanley Obi and written by Grace Onyia, the film explores themes of love, financial betrayal, agency, emotional vulnerability, and cultural identity. With cinematography by Rilwan Garuba, sound by Michael Joseph, and set design by Ekene Reginald Jonah. Production assistants Emanuel Onyia and Ebuka Onuchujwu. Executive producers Omoni Oboli and Tomi Adeoya. Starring Uzor Arukwe, BamBam Olawunmi Adenbuyan, Osereme Iregbenebor, Amanda Iriekpen, and Thelma Chukwunwenm.

The film is divided into several sequences, categorized into eleven distinct plot segments from the opening credits to the end credits. The plot segmentation of *Love in Every Word* (2025) is thus:

C. Opening Credits

1. Chioma and Davies' relationship tension is revealed in a flashforward.

2. Chioma's workplace pressure and clash with her boss.

3. Davies's forex scam exposed; Chioma ends the relationship.

4. Friends support Chioma and prepare her for the trip to Anambra.

5. Chioma meets Obiora during a traditional ceremony.

6. Obiora surprises Chioma at work with drummers; he's her new landlord.

7. Chioma and Obiora go on a romantic date and share personal values.

8. Chioma pulls away due to Obiora's accent; later, she opens up about her fears.

9. Davies returns; Ify wins the court case against him.

10. Obiora supports Chioma's dreams; she quits her job to start a perfume brand.

11. Obiora proposes, and Chioma accepts.

E. End Credits

Segment 1 features the beginning, a flashforward (cold open) that teases the later events of a film. This approach sets the emotional tone and central themes early on, drawing the viewer in and encouraging them to keep watching. Chioma is seen confronting her boyfriend, Davies, who shamelessly asks her for $2,000 after already squandering $5,000 she had earlier given him. The intensity of this moment is heightened through a close-up shot of Chioma's face just as she slaps him and coldly commands him to return everything she ever bought for him, including the clothes he is wearing.

Segment 2 transitions from this emotional climax, as the narrative rewinds to the present, where Chioma's life as a career woman is introduced. She is seen in a well-lit office space at a media company, Media Sense, giving professional feedback to colleagues, a medium shot emphasizing her authority and capability. A call from her mother disrupts this professional focus, reminding her about an upcoming traditional marriage-introduction ceremony and pressing her to consider marriage. Chioma dismisses the idea with biting sarcasm, referring to such events as "trophy daughter parades," clearly indicating her disillusionment with traditional marital expectations. Her professional life is also under pressure, as her boss assigns her a 104-page branding project due the same day. The demand was delivered with a veiled threat.

In Segment 3, the story then moves to the setting of a traditional introduction ceremony in Anambra State. Amidst the noise and festivity, Chioma catches sight of Obiora, a stranger whose presence immediately draws her interest. A carefully executed eye-line match signals a spark between the two. That same evening, in a quieter outdoor setting, the two strike up a conversation. Obiora surprises Chioma by calling her by her full name and referencing her job. Equally curious, Chioma reveals that she is aware of his real estate work and his reputation. The twist comes when Obiora admits he was the suitor her mother had in mind all along.

Segment 4 brings the settings back to Lagos as Chioma returns to her demanding workplace, only to be drawn into a surprising spectacle: the sound of traditional Igbo drumming that echoes outside her office. A tracking shot reveals Obiora orchestrating this cultural display to win her attention. Her boss reacts with fury, even threatening security intervention, but the scene takes a comic twist when Obiora reveals that he is the new landlord of the property.

In Segment 5, Chioma and Obiora begin dating, as the film softens. On one of their outings, he affectionately calls her "Achalugo," and their chemistry is warm and unforced. Yet, when Chioma invites him to spend the night, Obiora politely declines, stating that he desires something deeper than just physical intimacy. This surprising restraint endears him further

to both Chioma and the audience, contrasting sharply with her exploitative past relationship.

Segment 6 reveals how Chioma begins to withdraw, expressing discomfort with Obiora's pronounced Igbo accent. In conversations with her friends, Ify and Ovie, her superficial reasoning is questioned. They remind her of Obiora's virtues, his character, generosity, and respect. Still unsure, Chioma makes a hurtful comment about his accent during dinner at her home. Obiora's reaction, a subtle but pained look, exposes the emotional impact of her words.

Segment 7 reveals further tension when Davies returns, enraged over being served a court notice. Chioma discovers that her friend Ify had initiated legal action on her behalf to reclaim the money Davies owed. Davies, who had misused funds from his trust account, is ordered by the court to refund $12,000. After the verdict, Chioma calls Obiora, as they reconnect again.

In segment 8, Obiora and Chioma's bond deepens when Chioma visits a jewellery store with her friends. She eyes an expensive bracelet but hesitates because she cannot afford it. Unbeknownst to her, Obiora, also at the store, sees this and purchases the bracelet along with gifts for her friends. This generous gesture reflects his attentiveness and solidifies his role as a thoughtful partner. The reactions from Chioma's friends, filled with admiration and teasing, highlight the joy and lightness returning to her life.

In a dramatic late-night scene (segment 9), Chioma and Obiora are awakened at 3 a.m. by a phone call from her abusive boss. Obiora grabs the phone and firmly defends Chioma's dignity, warning the boss never to contact her at that hour again. The next day, in the office, Chioma boldly confronts her boss over a failed project, refusing to take the blame. She invokes her rights and subtly threatens legal and professional retaliation. This assertiveness marks her complete transformation, from a stressed employee to a woman who knows her worth, both personally and professionally.

In Segment 10, despite their strong bond, a rift emerges when Obiora offers to fund Chioma's perfume business. She refuses, insisting on building it alone. Though well-intentioned, her decision offends Obiora, who quietly distances himself. Chioma eventually quits her job and takes a junior colleague along with her to start her own business enterprise. Her friends later explain to Obiora that Chioma's refusal stemmed not from pride, but from a desire to prove her competence independently. This segment captures the delicate tension between love, support, and self-reliance in modern relationships. In segment 11, understanding her motives, Obiora returns to Chioma with an open heart. He proposes to her, and she accepts.

AI and Emerging Technologies in *Love in Every World* (2025)

AI and emerging technologies play pivotal roles in how films are made all over the world today, and Nollywood, like Hollywood and Bollywood, has also embraced this shift. Technology has changed not only the way movies are produced but also how they earn money, whether through ticket sales at the local box office or on video-on-demand platforms. The introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) in Nollywood has the potential to accelerate and enhance the accuracy of film production. While AI is still evolving, it is already helping to enhance the visual appeal and overall quality of films.

The production and release of *Love in Every Word* (2025) shows how digital filmmaking in Nigeria is changing, with artificial intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies opening up fresh vistas for creative and business gains. Made on a modest budget and shared directly

on YouTube, the film is a good example of how Nollywood filmmakers are utilising AI tools to overcome the limitations of traditional studios, connect with broader audiences, and enhance film quality without incurring significant expenses.

Emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence tools and digital-first distribution models, are redefining the rules of production, ownership, and access. These tools have not only made filmmaking more inclusive but also dramatically lowered the barriers for entry, empowering independent creators to produce high-quality films with minimal resources. This dynamic is clearly illustrated in the production and release of *Love in Every Word* (2025), an independent Nollywood film distributed via YouTube. Unlike high-budget projects locked behind subscription-based streaming services, this film was produced within a constrained financial framework. However, rather than relying on spectacle, its strategy focused on a strong story, cultural relatability, and visual clarity.

Technological advancement has strategically positioned artificial intelligence (AI) not as a replacement for human creativity, but as a supportive tool designed to reduce human stress and improve production efficiency in filmmaking. Prior to the rise of digital technology, visual effects were labour-intensive and often physically executed. As Hu (2016) notes, filmmakers once relied heavily on stunt photography, miniature models, and prosthetic makeup to achieve their desired visual spectacles. However, with the advent of digital special effects, defined by Sun (2024) as the use of computer graphics software to create virtual imagery, such as character design, virtual scenes, rendering, and post-processing, the post-production phase of filmmaking has become significantly more dynamic and expansive. Hu notes that:

> Film special effects, animation production, interior design, modelling of medical images, industrial simulation, and other sectors all employ digital special effects extensively. In the process of film production, some shots are expensive, dangerous, and difficult to shoot in real life. In traditional film special effects, the production of special effects is more inclined to use stunt photography, miniature model photography, electronic model stunts, composite stunts, stunt makeup, and other ways to solve these problems. After the computer is involved in the field of film special effects, the post-production ability of film special effects is greatly enhanced, and the content of digital film special effects is more extensive and in-depth. Rather than being a deciding factor in filmmaking, AI should be used as a tool. Teams working on film production can use artificial intelligence to assist with tasks like picture analysis and large data analysis, but the creative process still has to involve creativity and emotion. Instead of just depending on AI generated material, creators should keep their distinctive viewpoints and inventiveness (Sun, 2024, p. 3).

In *Love in Every Word (2025)*, this digital integration is clearly visible. The film's intimate cinematography and polished transitions suggest the careful use of accessible digital editing software, many of which now integrate features powered by machine learning. These tools support independent filmmakers by simplifying post-production processes, such as colour correction, sound balance, and subtitle generation. While the use of advanced technologies such as VR or synthetic media was not evident in this project, *Love in Every Word* reflects the growing trend of creators doing more with less, prioritizing substance and narrative over traditional production excess.

A key shift in the film industry lies in the decline of traditional studio dominance. For decades, major studios controlled as much of the profitable film content, effectively gatekeeping the industry. Today, however, independent productions, fuelled by reduced costs, easier access to tools, and distribution freedom, are gaining significant ground. The production of *Love in Every Word* is emblematic of this shift. With no major studio backing, the film's creators exercised complete artistic freedom. This independence allowed the story to connect deeply with its audience, reinforcing the idea that creative control is often more impactful than expensive aesthetics in filmmaking. The transformation is perhaps most evident in the realm of distribution. The traditional 90-day theatrical window, once a cornerstone of film revenue, has dramatically shortened or even disappeared in many cases. Simultaneous online and theatrical releases have become the norm, while some films are bypassing cinemas entirely. In this new landscape, *Love in Every Word* takes full advantage of YouTube's algorithm-driven ecosystem to reach a global audience without the financial and logistical burden of cinema premieres. Its free access model made it widely available to mobile users and viewers across urban and semi-urban Nigeria. Within days, it amassed millions of views, proof that access and reach no longer require large-scale cinema partnerships or paid subscription platforms.

The social media-driven marketing campaign further exemplifies the evolution of promotional strategies in Nollywood. In contrast to the controlled and top-down advertising methods of traditional distribution, *Love in Every Word* built momentum organically. Cast members, especially Uzor Arukwe and BamBam Olawunmi Adenbuyan, posted behind-the-scenes content, teasers, and countdowns that engaged followers and invited audience participation. Upon its release, the film sparked a wave of digital interaction, including memes, reviews, TikTok reactions, and Instagram reels, transforming it into a cultural phenomenon. These forms of engagement extended the film's shelf life and relevance, transforming it into a living conversation within Nigeria's youth-oriented digital space. This participatory reception reveals one of the greatest strengths of digital-first cinema: audience feedback and emotional resonance are immediate and visible.

As of June 2025, *Love in Every Word* had surpassed 25 million views and generated over 66,000 comments on YouTube. With YouTube paying creators who are part of the YouTube Partner Programme (YPP) between $1,000 and $5,000 for every 1 million views, Omoni Oboli could have earned between $25,100 and $125,500 from the 25.1 million views *Love in Every Word* had gathered as of June 2025. The platform's open architecture allowed for a two-way dialogue between creators and consumers, encouraging community interaction and cultural ownership of the film. Unlike closed subscription services, where data is often private and curated content limits visibility, YouTube fosters real-time conversations that can influence a film's trajectory beyond the screen. The growing success of creators on YouTube has inspired more filmmakers to release their short and feature films directly on the platform, bypassing traditional cinema distribution routes and gatekeepers. In recent months, audiences in Nigeria have seen renowned filmmakers like Kunle Afolayan open YouTube channels, where he shares classic films and encourages viewers to subscribe and watch his content.

Monetization under this model is also evolving. While subscription services like Netflix offer stable revenue through licensing and upfront investments, they require creators to relinquish significant rights, including audience data and, often, even final cut privileges. In contrast, YouTube enables filmmakers to retain ownership of their intellectual property. The monetization model, based on ad revenue, sponsored content, and viewer engagement, is more volatile, but also more democratic. It offers the possibility for viral success to

translate into financial gain, brand partnerships, and long-term visibility, particularly when content connects with viewers at a cultural level. This trend reflects a larger power shift in the global film industry. Ownership of intellectual property is becoming more central to the sustainability and influence of filmmakers. Independent creators now have the opportunity to maintain control over their narratives, branding, and digital licensing, tools once monopolized by major studios. Platforms like YouTube support this transformation by allowing creators to act more like startups, steering both the creative and commercial direction of their work.

A related and increasingly important innovation in independent filmmaking is the use of blockchain technology to disrupt traditional financing models. In contrast to older systems where producers relied heavily on institutional investors or distributors for funding, blockchain allows filmmakers to raise capital directly from their audience through Initial Coin Offerings (ICOs). These digital tokens represent partial ownership or revenue shares in a project, thereby democratizing investment and allowing fans to contribute to and benefit from the success of a film. Additionally, smart contracts automate licensing agreements and revenue distribution, ensuring creators are fairly compensated for digital rights, even across emerging formats like VR cinema. Although *Love in Every Word* did not utilize blockchain in its production, its autonomous, digitally distributed, and audience-centric model exemplifies how such innovations could be incorporated into Nollywood's funding and rights management frameworks in the future.

Conclusion

Artificial intelligence is emerging as a game-changing force, particularly in creative industries such as Nigeria's thriving Nollywood film industry. The use of Artificial Intelligence and emerging technologies is changing how films are made in Nollywood. This study, exemplified by *Love in Every Word* (2025), demonstrates that AI tools are already playing a practical role in enhancing production quality, editing, and audience engagement. Even with limited resources, independent filmmakers are now able to create professional and engaging content that reaches wide audiences through platforms like YouTube.

AI is not replacing creativity but is helping to make the filmmaking process easier and more efficient. The success of *Love in Every Word* demonstrates that strong storytelling and the strategic use of digital tools can achieve both cultural impact and financial success. As Nollywood continues to grow with the help of technology, filmmakers must still focus on keeping their stories original and culturally meaningful. If used wisely, these new tools can support the industry's progress while maintaining its unique voice and purpose in global cinema.

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