

Emerging AI Regimes and Contemporary Filmmaking in Nigeria: Governance, Practice, and Creative Futures

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Abstract

Filmmaking is rapidly transforming by Artificial Intelligence (AI) across the globe, with Nigeria's vibrant film industry (i.e. Nollywood) emerging as an adopter and a contested site for technological experimentation. How technological, institutional, and regulatory frameworks as emerging AI regimes are reforming creative practices and industry structures in Nigeria is examined in this study. Also, the integration of AI tools was explored in this study across pre-production, production, post-production, and distribution by situating Nollywood within global discourses of platform capitalism and algorithmic governance. The study highlights several case studies such as AI-enabled editing, subtitling, visual effects, and distribution on digital platforms. It addresses the challenges in governance related to intellectual property, labor, and cultural representation. The study, by drawing on a multi-level framework of AI regimes, emphasizes that in time to come, Nigerian filmmaking will depend on innovation that is balanced with protections for creative labor and cultural integrity. The study concludes by recommending policies and practices for building a comprehensive, sustainable AI-enabled film ecosystem in Nigeria and Africa in general.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Filmmaking, Nigeria, Nollywood, Regime.*

Introduction

Nollywood, as condensed in global discourse is a contemporary filmmaking industry in Nigeria, and the second largest film industry in the world by output, contributing to the world film industry with over 2,000 films produced annually [1, 2]. Known for its resourcefulness, cultural vibrancy, and speed, Nollywood operation for a long time has been within informal economies and decentralized production networks [3, 4]. Be that as it may, in the past decade, film industry in Nigeria has gradually embroiled with global digital infrastructures, particularly as international streaming platforms, such as Netflix, Showmax, Amazon Prime, and regional operators, such as iROKOTv, and Africa Magic incorporate Nigerian content into global circuits [5-7].

Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays vital roles in this transformation [8]. AI encompasses a wide range of technologies that enable automated or semi-automated decision-making, creative augmentation, and pattern recognition [9]. Recommendation algorithms are now underpinned by AI on streaming platforms, moreover, post-production tools (noise reduction and automated rotoscoping) are powered by AI, and multilingual subtitling is supported by AI for linguistically diverse Nigerian audiences [10]. Beyond tools, AI is gradually building business models and audience engagement strategies.

This study explores emerging AI regime in Nigerian filmmaking. By AI regime, we refer not only to the technologies but also to the market logics, social practices, and governance structures that mediate

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the means for deploying AI. This framing underscores AI as not only a neutral tool but also as part of a sociotechnical assemblage that redistributes labor, power, and cultural expression. We based the study on three interrelated research questions:

What method is used for integration of AI tools into filmmaking practices in Nigeria?

What governance challenges, labor dynamics, and power relations accompany these integrations?

What industry, community, and policy strategies could allow inclusive and culture-driven AI adoption in Nigerian film?

The study combines conceptual frameworks and analysis, literature review, methodology, and empirical illustrations drawn from trade publications, industry reports, and case studies. The study further situates experience of Nigerians within global shifts, while foregrounding the local dynamics of multilingualism, informality, and regulatory uncertainty. The bone of contention is the advantages and the disadvantages in adopting AI, where advantages bring creative opportunities, and disadvantages bring serious risks. The trajectory of AI adoption by Nollywood will depend on context-specific practices and proactive governance.

Conceptual Framework: AI Regimes and Film Ecologies

The work in science and technology studies, and political economy were extended by the notion of AI regimes, this is because they both view technologies as tools embedded in several aspects of governance, labor, and purpose driven, and not as isolated tools [11-13]. According to [14], components of the AI Regimes in Film are (1) Technological affordances, which are the actual AI capabilities, such as script generation, automated subtitling, and GAN-based visual effects. (2) Institutional actors, which include filmmakers, professional associations, post-production companies, global platforms, and government regulators. (3) Regulatory frameworks, which involve film policy initiatives, data protection regimes, and copyright law. (4) Market logics, which also involve subscription-driven models, recommendation systems, and monetization incentives that influence storytelling choices. (5) Cultural contexts, which include the multilingual, multicultural, and diasporic nature of Nigerian audiences.

Filmmaking in Nigeria can be referred to as an ecology, where there is an intertwinement of production, distribution, and reception [15]. The interventions of AI ripple across this ecology, in that, linguistic representation is affected by the automated subtitling; distribution visibility is shaped by recommendation algorithms; and labor hierarchies are altered by AI-driven editing. The application of AI regime lens enables people to see the adoption of AI as not only about technical efficiency but also about governance, who decides the way and manner the tools are deployed, who benefits, and who do not benefit [16].

Strands of Literature on Film and AI

There are three strands into which literature on film and AI can be grouped; they are (1) Global perspectives on AI in creative industries. (2) AI in film and media. (3) African and Nigerian contexts.

(1) Global perspectives on AI in creative industries: These include (a) automation versus augmentation, which involves the debate among scholars whether creative labor is displaced by AI or human creativity is enhanced, (b) platform capitalism, this is evident in the work of researchers like Srnicek [17], where it was showed the influence of platforms on centralizing control and monetizing data, thereby raising concerns about cultural homogenization, (c) algorithmic governance, which is evident in studies that underscore the importance of recommendation systems in shaping cultural consumption and audience exposure.

(2) AI in Film and Media: How AI is used in audience analytics, script analysis, editing, dubbing, and CGI is documented by research [18]. Hollywood has used AI for box office performance prediction and trailer generation [19]. Asians are taking advantage of AI-assisted dubbing and translation for cross-border circulation [20].

(3) African and Nigerian Contexts: Informality, rapid production, and local-global dynamics are emphasized by literature on Nollywood [21]. AI in Nigeria is directly addressed by few studies; however, emerging reports such as UNESCO and local press show that AI-based editing, automated subtitling, and low-cost VFX are gradually adopted by filmmakers. A gap is showed through policy analyses that film and tech policies in Nigeria rarely address AI explicitly, leaving regulation ad hoc [22, 23].

Global optimism is revealed by the literature about potential of AI and concerns about cultural homogenization and labor precarity [24]. For Nollywood, there is an intersection of these debates and longstanding issues of linguistic diversity, resource constraints, and global marginalization.

Methodology

To analyze the intersection of emerging AI regimes and contemporary filmmaking in Nigeria, a designed qualitative review and interpretive methodology are adopted by this study. To capture both governance perspectives and creative practices, the framework of the study combines systematic literature analysis, industry mapping, and case study evaluation. Fig. 1 shows a conceptual framework diagram illustrating governance, practice, and creative futures.

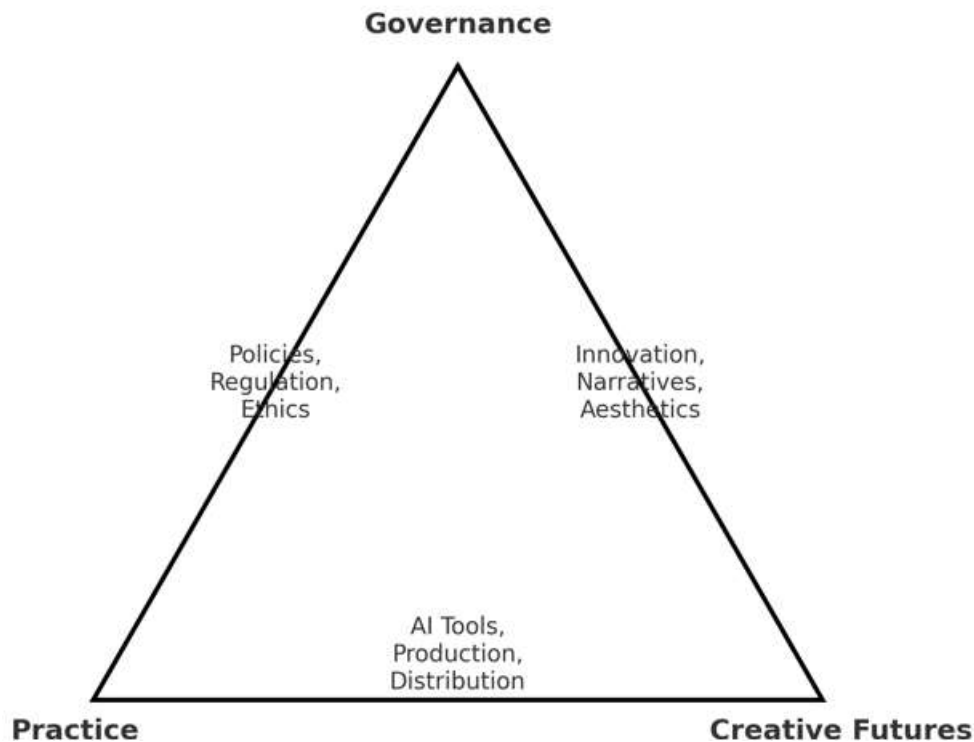


Fig. 1. A conceptual framework diagram showing governance, practice, and creative futures

Research Design

The research employs a multi-layered qualitative approach founded upon policy and governance analysis, such as government policy analysis, regulatory discourse analysis, and institutional document analysis shaping AI adoption in Nigeria. Industry practice analysis, such as examining how AI is incorporated into filmmaking practice by creative practitioners, studios, and filmmakers, forms part of the research design. Furthermore, the research design takes a future orientation, which is by combining insights on how stories, aesthetics, and future practice are redrawn by AI in Nollywood and surrounding creative industries.

Data Sources

The data used in this study is got from the following sources:

Academic literature on AI in African film studies, creative industries, and digital governance in peer-reviewed journal articles and conference papers.

Policy and institutional reports like National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) guidelines, Nigerian National Artificial Intelligence Policy (2023 draft), and UNESCO/UNCTAD digital economies reports.

Industry journalism and newspaper coverage, including interviews with Nigerian producers, trade publications (Variety, The Africa Report), and press releases from Nollywood production companies adopting AI technology.

Case studies, a number of which are selected films and production processes in which AI tools, including deepfake technology, Computer-Generated Imagery (CGI), scriptwriting, and AI-driven editing have been utilized or discussed within the Nigerian context.

Sampling and Selection

Key texts and cases most relevant to AI and filmmaking in Nigeria were selected by using purposive sampling. Selection criteria included evidence of Nigerian or African contextual relevance, direct focus on creative technologies enabled by AI, and representation of both practitioner voices and governance frameworks.

Analytical Framework

A comparative thematic analysis structured around three dimensions was employed by the study: Governance, including ethics, regulation, intellectual property, and labor implications of AI in Nigeria. Practice, including actual use of AI in Nollywood for production, distribution, and audience engagement. Creative futures, including speculative and innovative scenarios for cinema in Nigeria, considering global AI transformations.

Validity and Limitations

For enhancing validity, results were compared across practitioner interviews, policy documents, and secondary texts. Nevertheless, there had been certain limitations which the research was aware of, specifically lack or shortage of peer-reviewed Nigerian case studies on AI filmmaking. Promotional discourses, as potentially witnessed through dependence on media accounts and industry reports. The currency of published sources may be outpaced by rapid technological change. By combining creative foresight, industry practice mapping, and governance analysis, a comprehensive lens was offered by this methodology for understanding how contemporary filmmaking in Nigeria is being reshaped by emerging AI regimes.

Case Studies

In this section, four case studies were conducted, including Case A: AI in post-production and VFX workflows, Case B: Algorithmic distribution and platform economies, Case C: AI-assisted subtitling and localization, and Case D: AI in scriptwriting and pre-production.

Case A: AI in Post-Production and VFX Workflows

Post-production houses in Nigeria are exploring AI-based tools such as Topaz Video Enhance AI (for upscaling) and DaVinci Resolve's AI-driven noise reduction. Both time and labor costs are reduced by these tools, allowing more refined visuals at lower budgets. However, the need for entry-level assistants (who once handled manual frame cleaning) is also reduced by these tools. Fig. 2 shows AI in post-production and VFX workflows.

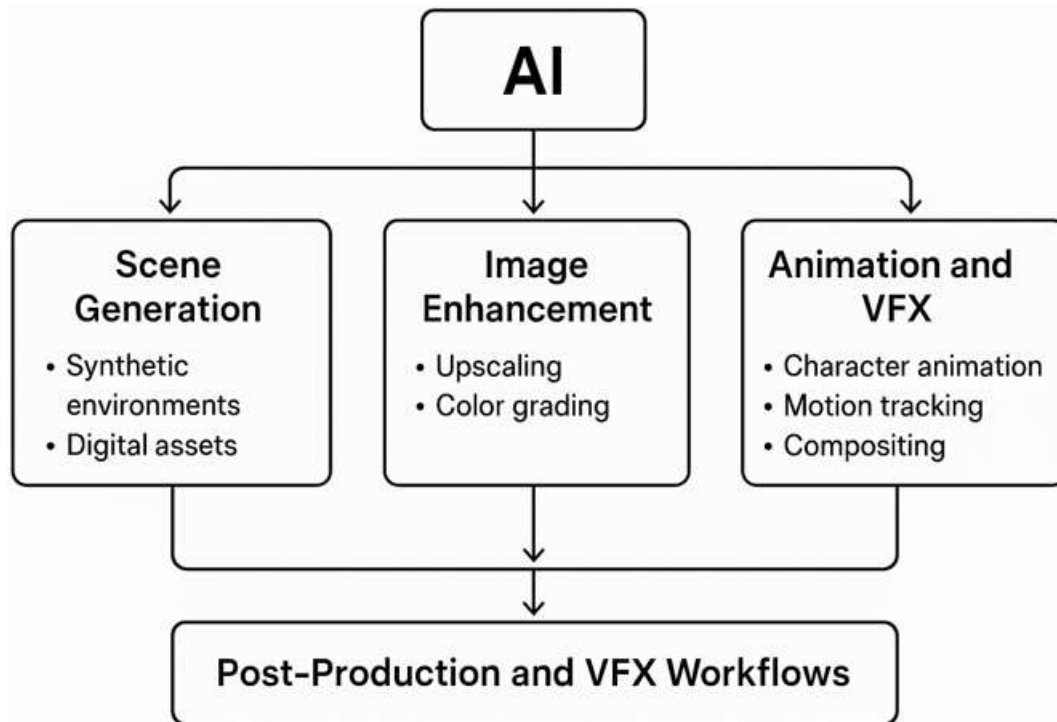


Fig. 2. AI in post-production and VFX workflows

Case B: Algorithmic Distribution and Platform Economies

AI-driven recommendation systems are used by streaming platforms like Showmax and Netflix. This raises visibility challenges for Nigerian films, such as local films being relegated behind global blockbuster by algorithmic bias. Moreover, diasporic audiences who are seeking African content are depending on AI for targeted recommendations. While some voices are amplified by the platform regime, others are marginalized. Fig. 3 shows algorithmic distribution and platform economies.

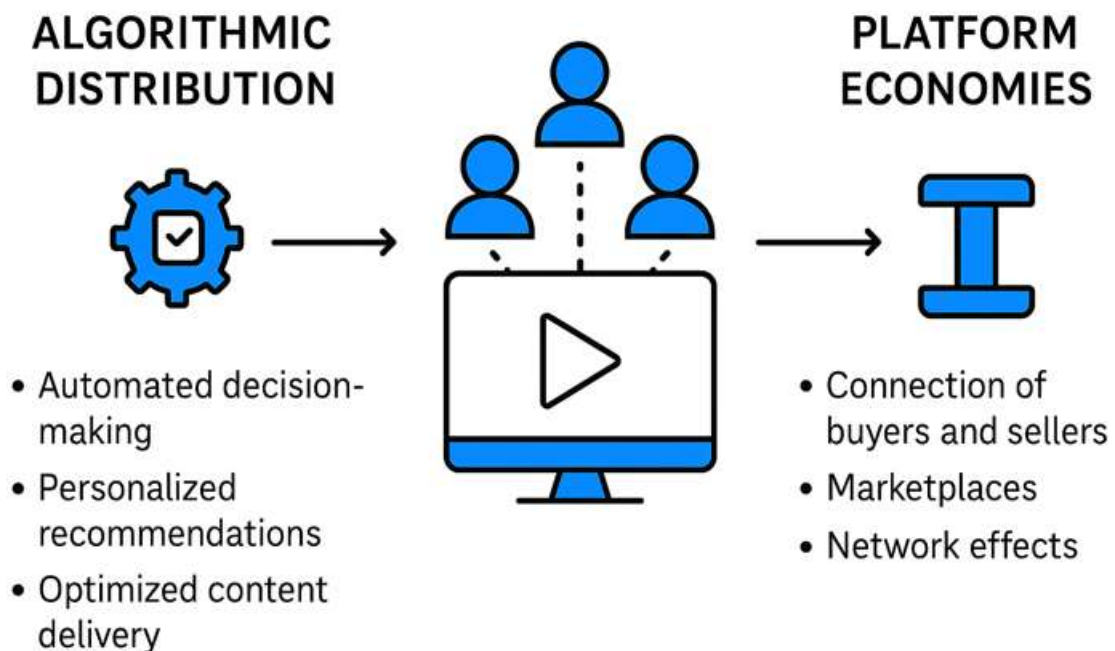


Fig. 3. Algorithmic Distribution and Platform Economies

Case C: AI-Assisted Subtitling and Localization

Multilingual reality in Nigeria, which include English, Pidgin, Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo makes subtitling important. Multilingual versions are generated by increasingly use of AI-based speech-to-text and translation tools, such as Google AutoML, and YouTube subtitles. While the use of AI for subtitling expands reach, reception is undermined by quality issues, such as mistranslation, and loss of cultural nuance. This limitation makes traditional, human-in-the-loop subtitling essential. Fig. 4 shows AI-assisted subtitling and localization.

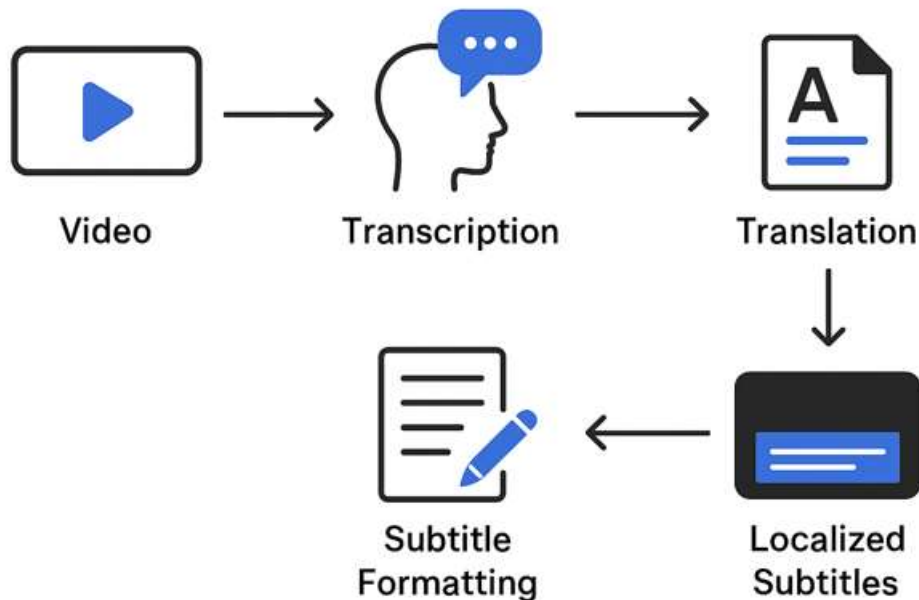


Fig. 4. AI-assisted subtitling and localization

Case D: AI in Scriptwriting and Pre-production

AI text generators, such as ChatGPT-like tools are beginning to be explored by some Nigerian writers for various assignments such as brainstorming dialogue or story arcs. This practice raises questions about authorship, novelty, and intellectual property. While homogenization is an issue to writers, they acknowledge utility of AI for speeding up drafts. Fig. 5 shows AI in scriptwriting and pre-production.

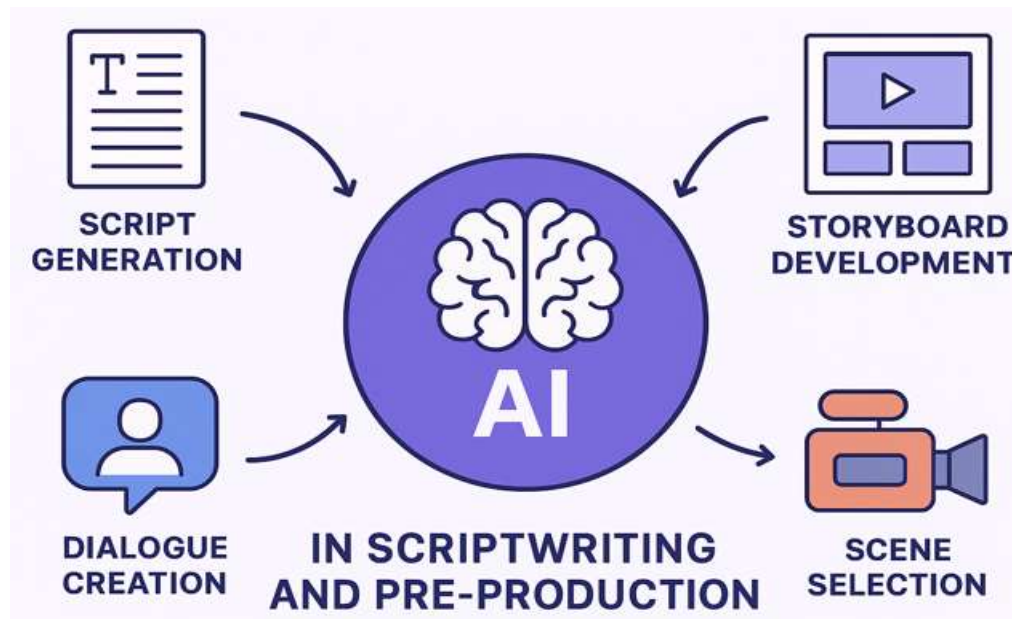


Fig. 5. AI In Scriptwriting and Pre-Production

Analysis: Themes and Tensions

Labor Reconfiguration

While certain manual roles such as assistant editors, and translators are displaced by AI tools, new oversight roles such as quality controllers, and AI tool specialists are also created. The risk is that new opportunities are outpaced by job losses, especially for young entrants.

Creative Affordances

Ambitious projects like CGI, and high-quality editing are attempted by resource-constrained filmmakers using AI. Aesthetic horizons may be expanded by this, but also risk overreliance on pre-trained, globally oriented models that may not reflect local textures.

Platform Power and Algorithmic Gatekeeping

Visibility is controlled by streaming platforms through algorithms, privileging content optimized for engagement. The pressure faced by filmmakers in Nigeria to adapt to global genres, thumbnails, and metadata strategies undermines experimental or culturally specific storytelling.

Governance Gaps

There are no clear policies on AI in Nigerian creative industries. There is silence on AI generated content by the intellectual property laws. Filmmakers are exposed to exploitation by global tech firms due to weakness of data protection.

Cultural Integrity vs. Marketization

Globally, Nigerian cinema is expanded through localization enabled by AI but risks flattening linguistic and cultural subtlety. Hybrid workflows that combine AI speed with human oversight are required by cultural pluralism.

Recommendations

For policymakers, it is recommended that AI is explicitly integrated into film policy frameworks in Nigeria. Developing guidelines for copyright and IP attribution in works assisted by AI is also recommended. Moreover, it is recommended to the policymakers to support training programs and capacity building for AI in creative industries. For industry, adoption of hybrid workflows such as AI + human oversight is recommended to balance efficiency with quality. In addition, negotiation of the contracts underpinning the platforms to provide fair visibility for Nigerian films is recommended. In addition, establishment of collective bargaining instruments for safeguarding creative labor is recommended. For practitioners, testing of AI as an augmentative tool, but not a replacement, is recommended. In addition, practitioners are encouraged to establish provenance and lock in intellectual rights by documenting workflows. Finally, for ethical AI adoption, they should share communal knowledge about best practices.

Conclusion

The governance, practice, and creative futures of emerging AI regimes and contemporary filmmaking in Nigeria have been presented in this study. AI integration into filmmaking in Nigeria is inevitable but uneven. While creative possibilities are opened by AI, it also puts labor, cultural nuance, and sovereignty at risk. By AI regime concept, it is obvious that adoption of AI is not only a technical issue but a governance challenge that requires coordinated action from those who make policies, industry leaders, and practitioners (creative communities). For Nollywood, the task is to harness the potential of AI while preserving cultural identity and equitable labor practices. If handled effectively, AI could help cinema in Nigeria expand its global influence while deepening its cultural roots. However, if left unregulated, it risks aggravating inequalities and cultural homogenization. Governance as much as innovation will determine the future of Nigerian film in the era of AI.

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