

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING MODELS FOR THE NAMIBIAN FILM INDUSTRY: AN  
EVALUATIVE STUDY OF TWO GOVERNMENT FUNDED PRODUCTIONS

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## ABSTRACT

For Namibia to become a developed nation by 2030, the government has pronounced in its vision 2030 document, the need to create jobs, provide infrastructure and develop human resources. A functioning film industry can stimulate all of the above as it does not only have the potential to return high profit on investment, but also to create employment (Cuff, 2013). Furthermore, cultural industries and film in particular can also play a role in education, raising consciousness and cultural reaffirmation within a formerly colonized people, furthering national healing, reconciliation and nation building – especially at the grass roots level (Bomba, 2010, p.2). One of the major challenges to developing a sustainable film industry is financing. A solution that Namibian film industry stakeholders often recommend to address the industry's financial deficits is more government involvement. However, in the past few years the Namibian government has undertaken investments to support the local film industry and the most funding per project to date went to the following projects: the feature film *Namibia: the Struggle for Liberation* and the TV soap opera *The Ties that Bind*. In both cases, mismanagement of funds was reported in local media. Controversies about *Namibia: the struggle for liberation* still appeared in local media 5 years after the film was completed as the funds were still not all accounted for and the film struggled to secure international distribution.

This study investigated these two case studies in order to establish successes and limitations of a government supported industry, and recommend sustainable approaches for building the Namibian film industry.

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Thank you.

## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to all Namibian filmmakers who still manage to produce films against all odds.

## DECLARATION

I, Joel K. Haikali, declare hereby that this study is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work, or part thereof has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution of higher education.

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Joel Kaudife Haikali

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Date

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

DTI - Department of Trade and Industry

FAN - Filmmakers Association of Namibia

GDP - Gross Domestic Products

GRN - Government of the Republic of Namibia

MICT- Ministry of Information and Communication Technology

N\$ - Namibian Dollar

NBC - Namibia Broadcasting Corporation

NFC - Namibia Film Commission

NFVF- National Film and Video Foundation

NGO - Non-Governmental Organization

NTN - National Theatre of Namibia

PACON - Pan-African Centre of Namibia

US\$ - US Dollar



## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Orientation of the study**

Most developing countries have pronounced a vision for transition towards becoming a developed country. In 2004, the Namibian government launched a Vision 2030 document that clearly articulates the need to create jobs, provide infrastructure, develop human resources, change patterns of ownership and reduce income inequality through poverty reduction by the year 2030 (Government of Namibia, 2004). The Vision 2030 document allows the Namibian government to focus on the development of key industries concentrating on a resource based industrial sector and commercial agricultural sector.

Traditionally, developing countries largely depend on the extraction of raw materials to develop their economies. In the Namibian case, this is reflected in the absence of cultural industries, film included, from discussions and plans around development strategies such as Vision 2030. However, according to a study by Devon and Torbay Council et al. (2006), the real assets of a modern economy come out of our heads and not out of the ground; imagination, knowledge, skills, talent and creativity are key to economic development. Cultural industries encapsulate these components and could therefore be vital for national development, which includes economic development and cultural preservation. Moreover, they are significant to the furthering of national healing, reconciliation and nation building (Bomba, 2010).

Hence, “if properly supported creative industries have the potential to not only contribute to the economy, but they can also play a key role as a nation-building tool that ensures due respect for cultural diversity, traditions, national values and heritage” (Thiec, 2009, p.1).

Cultural industries are therefore essential to influencing cultural identities that enable economic growth through the establishment of a sustainable industry that can meaningfully contribute to economic and human development. For instance with regards to economic contribution, in the U.S. cultural industries that include film contributed an estimated revenue of more than US\$1 trillion to the economy for the first time in a single year in 2012 (Bond, 2013). Another good example is the Nigerian film industry, which according to Abraham (2014) has generated estimated revenue of US\$800 million between 2011 and 2013. These are two very different countries and different industry models, which suggests that there might be different ways of transforming an industry into a sector that can meaningfully contribute to a country’s economy. Considering that the Nigerian film industry is largely unregulated, the contribution to economy might be different, but this will be further explored in the literature review.

Despite all the aforementioned arguments that highlight the importance of cultural industries and the contribution that such industries, including filmmaking, could make to the development and cultural consciousness of a country, most film industries in developing countries still seem to be struggling. There are different reasons for this: (1)

lack of funds (2) lack of market and distribution channels, (3) unfair competition with big foreign films as discussed by Gugler (2003) and Kamara (2004) regarding cultural industries in developing countries in general.

In many film studies, filmmaking is discussed as part of the *creative industries, audio-visual services and cultural industries*, and these terms are sometimes used interchangeably. Even if cultural industries have a broader scope as compared to the creative industry or audio-visual services, they might all encompass certain *aspects* of film making. This study used Martin Cuff's definition (2009) of the film industry as "*an umbrella term that describes a range of entertainment and production activities including the production of films, television programmes, tv commercials stills photographic production, animation and video games*" (Cuff, 2009, p.1).

This study focused on the sustainable development of the 'film industry' as a specific cultural sector. Generally, cultural industries, including filmmaking, are given low priority in most developing countries, thus practitioners often do not attain economic viability, failing to ensure a decent living for creators and other actors involved in the enterprise (Kamara, 2004). This seems to be the case in most African countries, where the "cultural sector- film in particular- is neglected and ignored resulting in cultural practitioners being forced to operate in an unregulated environment as their sector rarely appears in public policies" (Bomba 2010 p.2).

This argument presumes that the low importance governments attach to the cultural sector, film included, is the main reason why the industry is struggling.

However, the largely unregulated but seemingly flourishing Nigerian film industry “Nollywood” would challenge that argument.

As in most African countries, Namibian filmmakers and video production companies have been struggling to produce films and the few that manage to make films are further struggling to get their films seen by audiences, possibly due to the absence of cinema culture, a small population and lack of distribution channels (Haikali, 2006). One consequence of such circumstances is that filmmakers compete for limited corporate and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) funding to produce films to earn a living. What that means for the development of the industry especially in terms of content production and identity would be an interesting angle for further in-depth analysis, but this will not be the focus of this study.

Bomba (2010) stressed the “importance of the availability of local financing as it helps to decrease the dependence of cultural practitioners on Western funding and enables them to exercise more control over this powerful medium” (Bomba, 2010, p.12).

Possible options for financing local productions are either to obtain funding through the private sector, the local non-governmental sector or through the government.

In as far as an entirely local funding model such as one funded by the government would be feasible in Namibia, the matter is assessed in this study by focusing on evaluating the government’s substantial funding of the two projects, *Namibia: the Struggle for Liberation* and *The Ties That Bind*, with approximately 85 million Namibia Dollars.

## **1.2 Statement of the research problem**

As mentioned above, a flourishing film industry can contribute to a country's economic development, education and national reconciliation. The literature reviewed in this study indicated that Namibia's film industry is poorly resourced, and, not surprisingly, unable to play a major role in development, reconciliation and education. Estimates show that only a small number of films have been produced since Namibia's independence, providing evidence of the small size of this cultural subsector. The literature reviewed also indicated that one possible solution could be government involvement to establish a sustainable film industry in a country.

In terms of funding, the Namibian government provided substantial funding for the following film projects between 2005 and 2008, *Namibia: the Struggle for Liberation* (approximately N\$80 million) and the TV soap opera *The Ties That Bind* (approximately N\$5 million). However, opinions were divided as to whether these interventions would lead to the ultimate creation of a sustainable film industry in Namibia or not. It was feared by many film professionals that the financial provision of the aforementioned projects and the subsequent use of funds might have jeopardised future funding efforts by government.

The main aim of this study therefore, was to evaluate the effectiveness of the government's involvement in the sustainable development of the local film industry, using the two projects mentioned above as case studies.

The establishment of the Namibia Film Commission (NFC) with an aim to support the production of local films suggests political will from the government to develop the film industry.

There also appears to be underlying assumptions from the film industry and possibly the government, that the government has a moral obligation to support the development of the local film industry.

The two cases were chosen to investigate the factors that lead to successes and failures with regards to the two productions, in order to address the gap in our understanding of how government funding can be better utilised to achieve the ultimate goal of a sustainable film industry.

### **1.3 Research objectives**

The study was guided by the following key objectives:

- a) To establish the funding needs of the Namibian film industry from producers and key stakeholders.
- b) To evaluate the nature and effectiveness of government involvement in the production of the two film projects, *Namibia: the Struggle for Liberation* and the TV soap opera *The Ties That Bind*.
- c) To assess perceptions of Namibian film producers and other key stakeholders on the role government can play in strengthening the local film industry and the best way such involvement and support can be achieved.

- d) To assess the viability of different funding models for the film industry and their suitability to the Namibian environment.
- e) To recommend optimal policies and procedures of funding the film industry in Namibia by government and other agencies/corporations.

#### **1.4 Significance of the study**

Thus far there has not been a transparent or comprehensive analysis of the two productions chosen for this study, *Namibia: the Struggle for Liberation* and *The Ties That Bind*, even though a considerable amount of (taxpayer's) money was spent on them. Examining the two cases which were funded by the Namibian government allowed for an in-depth analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the models used to fund these productions, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders. Therefore, the findings could help prevent pitfalls for future funding endeavours of the same nature. Overall, the analysis was aimed at giving crucial insights into issues of funding, government involvement, regulations, as well as distribution & exhibition of local productions. The study furthermore addressed the research gap in the field of film in Namibia and its findings could contribute new knowledge to the study of creative industries in developing countries in general.

#### **1.5 The limitations of this study**

This study focused more on investigating the government's involvement in the development of the Namibia film industry. The decision to only focus on the two productions excluding other government supported projects is guided by the fact that

these were at the time of this study the biggest projects that were fully funded by the government. Therefore, the two cases provide a basis to understand the effectiveness of government's involvement in the development of the local film industry especially the funding aspects, considering points such as the criteria used to disburse the funds, the available skill to manage such funds, the sustainability of such a model, as well as the contribution of the produced films toward the national development goals.

In both productions there were allegations of mismanagement or misappropriation of funds and due to the sensitive nature of the case study, some respondents could hold back valuable information to protect themselves. To counteract any desire to withhold useful information, respondents were guaranteed anonymity. The role of the private sector and non-governmental organizations, especially when it comes to funding of films, is not investigated in detail as this would go beyond the scope of this study. As previously mentioned, the impact of NGO productions for the film industry might be an interesting topic for further research.

Moreover, there is limited literature on the Namibian film industry and limited literature on film industries in general in local libraries. However, available resources still allowed for extensive research into the phenomenon. Most of the findings are of a qualitative nature based on interviews with industry stakeholders, focusing on their involvement in the local film industry.



## **1.6 Summary of literature review**

In many film studies, filmmaking is discussed as part of the creative industries, audio-visual services and cultural industries. These terms are often used interchangeably. Even if cultural industries have a broader scope when compared to the creative industry or audio-visual services, they might all encompass certain aspects of film making. As mentioned earlier, this study used Martin Cuff's definition (2009) of film industry as "an umbrella term that describes a range of entertainment and production activities including the production of films, television programmes, tv commercials stills photographic production, animation and video games" (Cuff, 2009, p.1)

Technology has become a driving force in the development of TV and video films in Africa as it enables affordable storytelling for African filmmakers (Okome, 2007). A good example is the popular Nigerian "Nollywood" video films which, regardless of their poor technical quality, became the first notable distribution model on the continent (Okome, 2007). It would be interesting to examine if, and how the Nollywood model of making video films and their distribution could be applied in Namibia.

Namibia may have a small local audience but advances in technology can facilitate a global audience for Namibian filmmakers (Bomba, 2010, p.187). However, as much as technology brought possibilities for developing countries, a number of preconditions like appropriate regulatory frameworks, availability of qualified professionals, exhibition and distribution channels, to mention but the few, still appear necessary (Thiec, 2009, p.2).

Therefore, an appropriate and flexible support system is needed to help businesses in creative industries develop the talent, innovation, entrepreneurship and skills they require to flourish at all stages in their development (Devon & Torbay Council et al., 2006, p.8). For this reason, in some countries the focus of cultural industries is on skills development and training. For instance, in post-apartheid South African cinema, film schools have become vital as they expose students to international cinema, as well as focusing on the technological, social, aesthetical and political highlights in the development of cinema in all its aspects (Botha, 2007).

### **1.7 Summary of Methodology**

This study used a qualitative research approach to collect and analyse the information gathered from various sources related to the case study. Qualitative research design typically produces a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of people and cases (Patton, 2002). This increased the depth of understanding of the cases and situations studied as well as reduced generalization.

Since, the study mainly investigated people's experiences, enquiring about the meaning stakeholders derived from their experiences with regards to the two productions, an explorative and therefore qualitative approach was deemed appropriate. According to Leedy & Ormrod (2005, p. 35), "case studies are suitable to shed light on poorly understood situations therefore appropriate for explaining the complexity of funding for the local industry by critically analysing two concrete examples".

## **1.8. Sample**

The study employed purposeful sampling, which is described by Sellers (2007) as a non-random method of sampling, where information-rich cases for in depth study are selected. In this case, judgemental sampling was used whereby respondents who were anticipated to have knowledge about the topic based on the researcher's own judgement were pre-selected. Respondents were chosen based on their knowledge of the topic, linked to their role in the two productions, while other key informants, such as industry stakeholders were interviewed based on their involvement in the industry. Due to the size of the industry and the relative small number of people involved in the two case studies, the sample was expected to be less than 20 respondents. Pre-selected interviewees were asked to refer the researcher to other information-rich sources related to the two cases in line with what Mugo (1996) refers to as a useful snowball sampling method. Hence, a relatively small group of people involved in the two case studies was targeted with an open possibility of leading the researcher to other respondents.

## **1.9 Summary of research ethics**

According to Candy (2006), 'researchers must obtain informed consent of persons participating in research before the research begins' (p. 9), therefore in this study participants were provided with accurate information about the purpose, methods, demands as well as possible risks or inconveniences of the study and its possible findings. Confidentiality of the findings and the protection of the respondents' identities is particularly important (Maree & Van Der Westhuizen, 2009). Especially considering

the small size of the Namibian population and the even smaller size of the film industry, the aspect of confidentiality was taken very seriously in this study.

Therefore, to avoid negative repercussions for respondents, great attention was given to conceal the identity of the respondents especially where the respondents' comments might endanger his/her job or person in any way. The respondent were guaranteed that they would not be named in the study, whereby only characterizations would be used instead of the real name.

#### **1.10 The outline of the study**

The study is divided into sections in a manner which directly addresses the research objectives. It consists of 6 chapters, and the following is an overview of the subsequent chapters.

**Chapter 1** provides a general introduction to the topic as it discusses the importance of a functioning film industry and its potential contribution towards the development of a country, provided it receives the necessary support. This chapter also presents the research objectives, which are also addressed in the paper.

**Chapter 2** presents available related literature reviewed on the topic in Namibia, Africa and beyond, in an effort to understand what is already known about the subject matter. This included looking at the feasibility of a government as a source of funding in an effort to determine how state funds would best be utilised, as well as to explore the viability of different funding models in that regard.

**Chapter 3** deals with the methodology used in this study to collect and analyse the data as well as the instrument used to gather the information from different sources.

It explains the criteria used to select respondents and how the questionnaire was formulated. This chapter also discusses how the study addressed the issue of ethics during the data collection and data analysing phases.

**Chapter 4** presents and analyses the collected data guided by the research objectives and research questions. Respondents' opinions on the two productions, *Namibia: the Struggle for Liberation* and the *Ties that Bind*, with regards to government's involvement are presented in this chapter to form an argument. This chapter also includes the rationale for government involvement and the level of such involvement in the two productions as well as the lessons learnt by both the government and the film industry.

**Chapter 5** discusses findings in comparison with some of the literature reviewed and provides interpretation structurally guided by the research objectives.

It explores the relationship between the government and the film industry in Namibia after the two productions, *Namibia: the Struggle for Liberation and The Ties That Bind*.

**Chapter 6** concludes the study and makes specific recommendations on how the government can best participate in the development of the film industry as well as making recommendations regarding aspects of sustainable funding models that can be considered for the development of the Namibian film industry.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

This study aimed at establishing the funding needs of the Namibian film industry with a special focus on the feasibility of the government as a source of funding, in an effort to determine how the Namibian government can best assist in developing the industry. In this chapter, related literature was reviewed to investigate the background, rationale and nature of government involvement in film industries in different countries.

### **2.1 Conceptual framework**

Theoretically, the study is situated within the framework of post-colonial theory and cultural imperialism theory. Cultural imperialism, as a theory, emerged in the 60s to describe the global economic and cultural domination of western countries, especially the United States. Schiller (1976) describes it as "the sum of the processes by which a society is brought into the modern world system and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced, and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominating center of the system" (p.9). In other words, based on the fact that the west produced most of the media content and other products, if not all at that time, Schiller concluded that by exporting their culture and cultural products among others, the cultures of the receiving developing countries were dominated and slowly disappeared.

Edward Said (1994), argues that colonialism left a cultural legacy that replicates the justification for superiority of the imperial culture over the 'native' culture in need of being 'civilized'.

Similarly, postcolonial theory investigates consequences of colonialism from many different angles and the ways in which knowledge was or is constructed (Hayward, 2013). Critics question whether this does not then analyze everything through the lens of colonialism (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2013) and ignore human agency as an important factor that allows, for instance, for appropriation or hybridity (Sarikakis, 2004). It should, however, not be misunderstood as a single or totalitarian theory but rather as a framework that can help uncover the overt and hidden binary relations or versions of colonizer and colonized (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2013). In fact, post-colonial theory is “the domain of overlap between these imperial binary oppositions, the area in which ambivalence, hybridity and complexity continually disrupt the certainties of imperial logic” (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2013, p. 20).

Therefore, Murpey (2000) asserts that ‘the post-colonial’ if not oversimplified can be a “useful and extremely strategic critical term in the analysis of contemporary African cultures” (p. 248).

The discourses around the first films by African filmmakers such as Sembene Ousmane and the formation of organizations such as the Federation of African Filmmakers FEPACI, were greatly concerned about how to redress the consequences of colonialism (Murpey, 2000; Armes, 2006). In that same vein, Bomba (2010) argues that in post-colonial Africa, governments should actively try to address the distorted images and narratives about local culture that were created and multiplied due to colonialism, and she particularly investigates cultural policy and Namibian film policy infrastructure in that regard.

Post-colonial theory can help ‘read’ films and structural relations in that context (Hayward, 2013) while cultural imperialism theory informed by post-colonial theorists acknowledges the continuation and consequences of imperial logic that continue to “reproduce processes of domination” (Sarikakis, 2004, p.81).

Over the past decades, a number of studies on African cinema have been undertaken, mostly about its historical development with critical reflections on the political and social content of films produced in post-colonial Africa and what that meant for identity formation (Tomaselli, 2002; Armes, 2006; Diawara, 2010) as well as the role film can play in the society, especially with regards to nation-building (Diawara, 1992; Gugler, 2003; Bomba, 2010). Franz Fanon, who was one of the most influential writers with regards to postcolonial theory, describes the role of the native poet in relation to national culture, and this could also be the ‘filmmaker’. The work of the native poet in the post-colonial society must negotiate both the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial period and negotiate a new way “until he has found the seething pot out of which the learning of the future will emerge” (Fanon 1958, p. 225).

According to Fanon “national consciousness will both disrupt literary styles and themes, and also create a completely new public (pp.239-240)”. This will be achieved by the native writer “addressing his own people” (p.240). In the case of films, the filmmaker would have to start making films for local audiences.

Cinema arrived in African countries with former colonizers and its primary role was as such, to justify and multiply supremacy and exploitation (Armes, 2006; Haynes, 2011).



After independence the first African films were often funded by former colonizers. In this regard, notably the French government dominated funding of films in its former colonies. And while the French government's film funding was instrumental in filming activities especially in West Africa, the structure and relationship remained unequal (Armes, 2006). Mostly, the films had French producers attached to them and editing happened in France, and no filmmaking infrastructure was created in the country. Hence one could question how far these films were made for local audiences or their relevance for these audiences if one was to see film or poetry in the way Fanon described it, that is as a way of creating new consciousness.

Films were however still critical in reflecting on colonial realities and their legacy in creating new identities. They were often discussed within the framework of postcolonial theory. On the whole, however, the majorities of films accessible were and still are Hollywood films. The assumption that such 'cultural domination' has negative consequences as pointed out by Said (1994), is in a way echoed in the efforts of UNESCO working towards the protection of cultural diversity culminating in the adoption of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Cultural Expression, and the Convention on Safeguarding Cultural Heritage (Brooks, 2006). The former was ratified by Namibia in 2006 and the latter in 2007.

While on the one hand, the Namibian government does not explicitly mention redressing colonial inequalities in its development goals such as 'the Vision 2030 and the Namibia Film Commission Act', one could argue that the government implicitly acknowledges the need to address the consequences of the country's recent history in its strategies by

specifically mentioning issues such as nation-building in its constitution (Government of Namibia 1990) and the goal of uniting people in its vision 2030. The Namibia Film Commission (NFC) could be understood as a conduit for creating infrastructures that facilitate nation building, amongst others. Bomba (2010) reached the conclusion that despite political will, the overemphasis of the Namibia Film Commission on attracting international productions to film in Namibia will not be able to address the legacy of colonialism.

Nowadays, however, filmmakers are more concerned with how to create popular cinema and build a viable industry rather than post-colonial discourse (Murphey, 2000). In that regard, it should also be considered that in Namibia and South Africa, which both achieved independence much later than West-African countries, one will find so called born-free filmmakers that never had a colonial experience and as such might have a different agenda.

In terms of outside funding, France's funding is no longer only open to its former colonies, furthermore, they have been joined in funding different film ventures by the European Union and other countries such as Spain and Brazil, and film festival funding such as Dubai and Lucarno (Sanogo, 2015).

However, partly due to the insufficiency of such approaches to build sustainable industries (which is something they do not set out to achieve) and some success stories such as in Morocco, there have been renewed calls for state intervention in national cinema development in Africa (Sanogo, 2015).

In most African countries, nationalized approaches have failed to create a viable national cinema (Armes, 2006) and African states in the 80s and 90s were discouraged by international financial institutions from intervening directly in the cultural sector (Mhando, 2009; Sanogo, 2015). To a certain degree, the absence of the state stimulated the establishment and growth of the video industry in Ghana and Nigeria, the latter now commonly known as Nollywood (Mhando, 2009; Haynes, 2011; Sanogo, 2015). However, due to the infrastructure as well as capital which are needed to establish a film industry, the government has a role to play (Armes, 2006; Haynes, 2011).

Even in commercialized industries such as Hollywood, the state creates an enabling environment with tax breaks and incentives that heavily subsidize the industry, and in Europe states get directly involved in film funding (Sanogo, 2015). Therefore, the question might not be whether the state gets involved but “the question at hand remains the modalities of such intervention” (Sanogo, 2015, p. 144). This study investigated these modalities for the Namibian context using examples of two cases in which the government directly funded films. These have to be understood within the policy infrastructure, and relations between the industry and the government. The literature review, therefore, sets the parameters for the Namibian context and the role of the state, along with considering models from other countries. For that purpose, it begins with an overview of the Namibian context.

## **2.2 Overview of the Namibian film industry**

The history of the Namibian film industry before the country's independence in 1990 is one of colonial cinema and anthropological movies that were made about the different "exotic" tribes of the country by foreign filmmakers (Haikali, 2006).

Only after independence in 1990 did Namibian filmmakers start producing films mostly funded by foreign Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). This phenomenon of NGO funding is somewhat still evident today.

It took the Namibian government over a decade after independence to focus attention on the development of the local film industry with the establishment of the Namibia Film Commission (NFC) in 2000. The period after the 80s was marked by the withdrawal of other African states from their cultural sectors and by market liberalisation (Mhando, 2009; Sanogo 2015) and this might have influenced the way the Namibia Film Commission was set up.

The NFC was established as a statutory body by an Act of Parliament in 2000 with the mandate to develop the Namibian film industry (Government of Namibia 2000). However, according to Bomba (2010), it was not until 2002 that the Namibia Film Commission commenced operations with very limited resources. The Namibia Film Commission's Act of 2000 specified the board's composition of representatives from various sectors to ensure diversity and representation at different levels (NFC Act 2000). In line with the amended Act of 2001, three of the Commissioners would be government appointees from the following institutions: (1) Ministry of Information and

Communication Technology, (1) Ministry of Home Affairs & Immigration and (1) Ministry of Environment and Tourism. In addition, the Minister of Information and Communication Technology would appoint two representatives nominated by a recognized body that represent the film industry (in this case, the Filmmakers Association of Namibia) (Government of Namibia, 2001). The Filmmakers Association of Namibia (FAN) was established with the aim to lobby the government on both, funding and the formulation of policies that are favourable to the development of the local film industry (FAN 2015).

The NFC Act also made provisions for the establishment of a Film and Video Fund “to develop, produce and distribute Namibian film, video and television projects” (Government of Namibia, 2001). Moreover, the Namibia Film Commission undertook notably, two major investments between 2005 and 2008 to support the film industry by providing funding for the following film projects, *Namibia: the Struggle for Liberation* and the TV soap opera *The Ties That Bind*. While the NFC has since funded other short and feature film projects, the two selected for the purposes of this study remain the projects that received the highest funding at the time of this study.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In 2014 a feature film named “*Katutura*” was shot, produced by Obed Emvula, a NFC Commissioner on the board and it later emerged that the Namibia Film Commission had funded the film with at least N\$3 million ([http://www.namibian.com.na/indexx.php?archive\\_id=135793&page\\_type=archive\\_story\\_detail&page=1](http://www.namibian.com.na/indexx.php?archive_id=135793&page_type=archive_story_detail&page=1)) However, since the Namibia Film Commission has not given out any official information about how much funding they provided or still provide for *Katutura*, the researcher still considers *Namibia the Struggle for Liberation* and *The ties that bind* the projects that received the most funding up to date.

Beyond funding local films, the Namibia Film Commission has been focusing most of its efforts and resources on the promotion of Namibia as a filming location for foreign film productions (Bomba 2010).

### **2.3 Namibia as a location for international film productions**

According to the Namibia Film Commission Act of 2000, the NFC's objectives are to:

*(a) Promote Namibia as a film location for film production on the international market, (b) attract film producers and facilitate their initiatives to carry out film productions in Namibia, (c) Encourage producers to employ or make use of Namibian personnel and facilitate for film production, and (d) establish relationships with any local or international person who may contribute to the development and promotion of the film industry in Namibia* (Government of Namibia 2000, p. 4).

Based on the assumption that attracting foreign productions to come to Namibia could further help promote the growth of the local film industry, the NFC has been investing money in sending representatives (mostly board members) to different international film festivals and location fairs to market Namibia as a potential filming location. There are also efforts by the Namibia Film Commission to lobby the government's approval of the "Namibia Film Incentive Programme" with the aim to increase the number of foreign productions coming to Namibia (Cuff, 2013).

One might argue that the NFC's approach in attracting foreign productions is working. For instance, some of the high profile productions that used Namibia as a filming

location were “Hollywood blockbusters such as Mad Max Fury Road - with a local spend of over \$350 million, 10,000 BC, Flight of the Phoenix, The Cell, Steel Dawn and Red Dragon” (Cuff, 2013, p. 8).

This phenomenon is believed by stakeholders to have the potential of bringing revenue into Namibia and promoting the country as a tourist destination. For instance, Hartenstein (2010) asserts that more efforts should be made to present Namibia as a young prospering country to the rest of the world, and as a suitable filming destination that bears substantial economic potential for local small to medium sized corporate enterprises in a variety of business sectors. Both, the travelling to festivals as well as the above listed proposed incentive programs focus on attracting foreign productions to film in the country.

However, Cuff (2009) remarked, with regards to the South African film industry, that the reliance on big budget international film productions alone cannot create a sustainable local film industry (Cuff, 2009). On the one hand, “it brings in work and foreign currency while on the other hand it tends to be unregulated and this can lead to instances where the local industry is undermined” (Joffe & Jacklin, 2001, p. 12).

Often foreign productions come with their own equipment, their own stories and their own key crew and cast with the aim of hastily making use of filming locations (Haikali 2006). Furthermore, as Armes (2006) points out with regards to Algeria as a filming location, film professionals might be able to practice in ‘subordinate’ roles that will be open to them but “the sheer size of the financial resources behind international

productions such as *Lawrence of Arabia* or *Raiders of the Lost Ark* makes this model of production irrelevant to indigenous African producers” (Armes, 2006, p.32).

Therefore, the focus should also remain on stimulating home-grown productions that tell local stories, so that firstly, the workforce is not entirely relying on foreign productions and secondly, local directors and producers get to realize local projects.

It is important to note however, that an appropriate and flexible support system appears necessary to help businesses in the film industry to develop the talent, innovation, entrepreneurship and skills they require to flourish at all stages in their development (Devon & Torbay Council et al., 2006).

As previously mentioned, the study looked at some of the funding models, paying special attention to the roles that governments play and their level of involvement. The study considered models such as the South African state funded model and the Nigeria/Nollywood private funded model, some examples from Europe (mostly Germany and France), the American-Hollywood funding model as well as the alternative genre of the Latin American Telenovelas.

#### **2.4 African funding models and level of government’s involvement**

According to Ndiaye (2010), filmmakers in most African countries are faced with a variety of obstacles when it comes to funding films. Moreover, if a film is produced, African filmmakers are then faced with a second problem, which is the distribution of



the films to their audiences. There is a separate debate about who those audiences are or should be.

With funding coming mostly from outside of the country, in some ways most filmmakers have not produced films for African audiences but rather for a European art house audience and festival circuit, where ironically, African films do not sell well on scale (Armes, 2006 and Haynes 2011).

The Nigerian film industry, commonly known as Nollywood has taken a different approach which is discussed below. “The problem of distributing audio-visual products is arguably the primary blockage in the film and television value chain in the region” (referring to Southern Africa) (Joffe & Jacklin, 2001, p. 13).

That means most of the films produced in Africa do not reach the African market which as a result means they do not get to be seen by audiences and thus do not make a return on investments.

Market liberalization in many sectors also affects African filmmakers and the distribution of their films. For instance, “locally produced films have to compete with the influx of cheaply imported films that are also cheaper for the movie theatres” (Bomba, 2010, p.52). This has affected the ability of local filmmakers to market their products locally and to have them shown in local film houses. In fact, often the whole infrastructure such as the content of films, production costs, expertise, and exhibition venues is not set up to serve the local market (Armes, 2006).

However, Kamara (2004) argued that often cultural enterprises themselves, such as film producers, do not undertake sufficient activities to develop their markets and audiences, especially within the local market, where public awareness of the arts is often lacking. Nollywood is a good example of how African content can be marketed and distributed. Kamara further stressed the importance of developing a sustainable market that would “allow actors across the value chain of a cultural product such as film producers to earn a living on a long-term from their creative activities without the aid of donor funds” (Kamara, 2004, p. 24).

In Africa two different film industries co-exist: on the one hand, a low-budget, privately funded, high volume industry supported by video sales and on the other hand, a more government supported industry that mostly produces conventional films as per western definition (Thiec, 2009).

The Nigerian film industry ‘Nollywood’, leads the first model based on video productions (DVD and TV) across the continent and abroad, now also being made accessible through African movie channels provided by pay television operators such as DSTV. Regardless of the fact that the films are often referred to as technically poor quality films, Nollywood became the first notable production and distribution model on the continent (Okome, 2007 and Haynes, 2011). The study looked at this model with special focus on, and interest in the role of the Nigerian government in the local film industry.

According to Pager (2011), the Nollywood model has thrived without the government's financial support and without even a functioning copyright system. In fact, it might have been the lack of government support structures that encouraged Nollywood (Mhando, 2009; Hanyes 2011; Sanogo, 2015).

This does not mean that there are no regulatory structures in place regarding film in Nigeria. The Nigerian Film Corporation (also referred to as NFC) established in 1979 had a great influence on changing ownership of production and distribution from foreign to Nigerian ownership after independence (Ekwuazi, 1987). Already at the onset, however, there seems to have been some confusion about the mandate of the NFC and other government agencies such as Film Division of the Ministry of Information and the Nigerian Film Distribution Company. The second crucial government agency in the sphere of regulation is the National Film and Video Censors Board which, in the latest report that was available online, published a 6 year review on all the films that were censored, classified and registered each year between 1994 and 2000 (National Film and Video Censors Board, 2000). The report suggested that investment in the Nigerian film industry grew from 25 million in 1994 to 3.4 Billion in 1999. Ekwuazi and Nasidi proposed that processes and policies should be more streamlined and that the Nigeria Film Corporation should play a central role in advancing production of films, ownership, distribution, and audience accessibility. It would, however, appear that the so-called Nollywood films escape a system of regulation and censorship.

The spread of the Nollywood model was aided by digital technology that became a driving force in the development of filmmaking in Africa (Okome, 2007).

This means that with the availability of affordable digital equipment, most African filmmakers can now tell their stories.

However, Thiec (2009) argued that as much as technology brought possibilities for developing countries to tell their stories, a number of preconditions like appropriate regulatory frameworks, availability of qualified professionals, exhibition and distribution channels, to mention but a few, still appear necessary for the development of a sustainable industry in the traditional sense. It would then be prudent to further investigate under which circumstances an involvement of the Nigerian government in the Nollywood industry could maximize its potential or cause its demise.

The Nollywood model seems to depend heavily on DVD sales and the fact that the country has the largest population in Africa contributes to its success. In an attempt to see how the Nollywood's self-funded model could potentially work in Namibia, one might have to consider the country's population of 2,3 million that might only be able to sustain a very small number of such films. However, Bomba (2010) argued that even though Namibia has a small local audience, the country can use its advanced technological infrastructure to reach global audiences for Namibian films. This implies that regardless of a small market for locally produced films, Namibia too could have the potential, through its advanced infrastructure, to produce films that can be distributed internationally.

The second funding model discussed in this study is the South African model, which seemingly follows the conventional approaches of filmmaking (as per western

definition). Ndiaye (2010) wrote of a phenomenon where films are shot on film cameras (or with highest definition film cameras), in more customary conditions, screened at international festivals, and often made by directors who mostly have studied in Europe or the United States. While the existence of filmmakers trained in the 'West' and the occurrence of African films being screened at international festivals might be found all over Africa, South Africa seems to lead in this group.

In contrast to Nigeria, the South African government is more directly involved in the development of its film industry through the provision of development funds and the formulation of favorable policies. The South African film industry is subsidized and incentivized through government institutions such as the National Film and Video Foundation (NIVF), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and the Provincial Film Commissions (NFVF 2012). The incentives are also used to attract foreign productions to South Africa and encourage them to spend money locally. The above mentioned bodies were established to support the development of the local film industry. For instance, the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) is a statutory body that was created in terms of Act No 73 of 1997 as amended by the Cultural Laws Amendment Act 36 of 2001, with the aim to develop and promote the South African film and video industry, domestically and internationally (Botha, 2003 and NFVF, 2012). That would include the funding of local films and the development of skills in the country, with a special emphasis on previously disadvantaged groups, as well as assisting filmmakers to market their work internationally (Thiec, 2009).

Some of the objectives of the NFVF are to develop and promote the film and video industry as well as conduct research into any field of the film and video industry. It strives to support the production of high quality film concepts and screenplays, to increase training initiatives across the value chain, attract foreign film productions to South Africa, to control the negative impacts of piracy, as well as sign co-production treaties with other industries (NFVF, 2013).

However, “despite the establishment of the NFVF and its significant positive initiatives such as the Film Resource Unit to develop audiences for South African films, local filmmakers are still struggling to find an audience for their work (Botha, 2008 p. 17).

Furthermore, the NFVF’s limited funding cannot cover the entire training, production, distribution and exhibition needs of the film industry (Thiec, 2009).

According to Botha (2008), it became necessary for South Africa to establish partnerships with other film industries after the collapse of apartheid. As a result, co-production treaties were signed with countries such as Canada, Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Australia, New Zealand and Ireland. Normally such treaties would include co-productions where two or more countries could share resources and skills to produce a film project. But more important is the possibility of accessing finances from the partner countries (Botha, 2008).

The National Film and Video Foundation have been compiling and publishing annual reports every year since 2007 and those reports are available online. It can be assumed

that those reports enable the NFVF to determine the industry's needs such as where to allocate funds, lacking skills and evaluate the success of its projects.

According to Thiec (2009), "South Africa's entertainment industry is valued at around 7.4 billion Rand, with film and television generating more than 5.8 billion Rand in economic activity each year according to the Department of Trade and Industry "(Thiec, 2009, p.84) .

Moreover, the NFVF report of 2013 on the economic baseline shows that the South African film Industry (SAFI) contributed 3.5 billion Rand to the country's gross domestic products (GDP) along with creating 25 175 jobs (NFVF, 2013).

Nollywood generated estimated revenue of US\$800 million between 2011 and 2013 (Abraham (2014).

Besides its shared apartheid history and economic ties, Namibia seems to look at South Africa in many areas. The Namibia Film Commission Act of 2000 for instance, seems to be loosely based on the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) Act of 1997. Therefore a brief comparison between the NFC and the NFVF of South Africa was conducted.

(1) The NFVF Act makes provision for raising alternative funds such as through donations from any source, interest on investments, income or special funds. The NFC Act does not allow the institution to make any profit therefore it depends on a small budget from the Ministry of Information Communication Technology.

(2) The NFVF is managed by qualified experts in relevant fields, who are selected through a transparent process, while the NFC board is managed by individuals appointed by the Minister of Information Communication Technology at his/her discretion.

(3) The NFVF Act makes clear provision for checks and balances while the NFC Act is quite vague on transparency, accountability, and repercussions thereof. For instance, 'members of the NFVF Council shall not be eligible for grants from the Council during their term of office' while the NFC Act is not explicit on this issue and only specifies that board members need to declare any interest they might have in writing. In practice, however, the NFC board does not reveal, in an organized form, any records of proceedings or decisions to the public or its constituency: the film industry.

In summary, the literature revealed that in Africa, filmmakers often struggle to fund and distribute their films. Thanks to the availability of affordable digital equipment, African filmmakers can now tell their stories. As previously stated, scholars such as Thiec (2009) argued that as much as technology provides possibilities in Africa, a number of preconditions like appropriate regulatory frameworks, availability of qualified professionals, exhibition and distribution channels to mention but a few, still appear necessary for the development of a sustainable industry in the traditional sense.

While Nigeria's 'Nollywood' is often criticized for its poor quality films, it has thrived without the government's financial support. In South Africa, the government, through the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF), regulates and finances the production



of local films. Namibia seems to follow the South African model with the establishment of the Namibia Film Commission (NFC) that emphasizes marketing Namibia as a filming destination. However, despite all the NFVF's efforts to fund the development of the South African film industry, local filmmakers are still struggling to find an audience for their work.

Furthermore, the government subsidy is not enough to fully cover the different needs of the film industry.

## **2.5 European funding models and level of government's involvement**

Most European governments seem convinced of the cultural importance of their cinemas thus have introduced national and regional film support institutions, governing and handling the provision of subsidies. According to Morawetz (2007), in 2005 there were a staggering 182 of these support bodies in 31 European countries, providing a total amount of more than EUR 1.3 billion of public support excluding tax incentives.

These countries generally apply restrictive barriers on foreign films entering the local market, with the aim to protect and promote a home-grown film industry that can counter the Hollywood domination of the local market (Hanson, 2006).

According to Pager (2011), defenders of cultural protection often argue that "cultural goods embody externalities that market pricing fails to capture" therefore the norms of free trade should not apply (Pager, 201, p. 68). That would imply that cultural products such as films contain values that cannot be measured through commercial success alone.

In France, for instance, there is a state-inspired industrial structure that assists film production at every stage, from project planning to distribution, through its governing body the *Centre National de la Cinematographie* (Shaman, 2000). Shaman further states that similarly, in Germany the most important source of funding for German filmmakers is the German Federal Film Board, or *Filmfoerderungsanstalt* (FFA).

The FFA was created in 1968 with a mission to strengthen the output of the German film industry both culturally and economically (Haglund, 2006).

France was equally dedicated to promote a home-grown film industry to counter what it saw as the cultural menace of Hollywood and its large slice of box-office revenues (Shaman, 2000).

However, Morawetz (2007) argued that despite the generous public support, most film industries in European countries still remain commercially unviable largely because of a failure to attract audiences for their films. Morawetz's argument suggests that even though European filmmakers get financial support from their respective governments, their films often fail to attract a wider audience. As a result, according to Pager (2011), European films are forced to rely on reviews by critics to generate publicity, reinforcing their tendency to value praise from cultural elites over popular audiences (Pager, 2011).

Nevertheless, there seems to have been an increase in 'pan-European' film distribution in the past 5 years. For instance, according to the European Audio Observatory in 2013, the attendance for European Union films grew by 12% year on year, amounting to around 313 million admissions, boosted by films such as *Skyfall*, the latest installment

(at the time of the report) of the James Bond franchise and the French film titled *The Intouchables* that became the most successful French film according to the article on key findings of the European Audiovisual Observatory's report (2013).

The above information indicates that there has been an increase in the market share of European films, challenging Pager and Morawetz, who argued that European films are generally not commercially viable due to the fact that they fail to attract local audience.

To what end these films are being funded must also be considered. If it is to balance the Hollywood dominated 'world view' with a home-grown perspective as an alternative, then market domination might not be the only measure of success.

A good example is the Danish Film Institute, which according to Scoffier (2014) promotes a risk taking attitude when it comes to content creation, though not excluding profits. Between 2011 and 2014, the Danish Film Institute, founded in 1997, was allocated a budget amounting to 281 million Euros by the Danish parliament and a quarter of these funds were geared towards youth productions, and policies that promote access to cinema for the entire youth population (Scoffier, 2014). According to Direitinho (2012), legislation was passed in the 80s to spend at least one quarter of the annual budget on film funding, especially targeted at the youth and it appears those policies have paid off.

This approach to build tomorrow's audience as a far reaching policy has been significantly effective as today the average Danish person goes to the cinema more often

than their European neighbors, accounting for 30% of tickets sold annually (compared with 36 % in France, the highest level in Europe (Scoffier, 2014).

## **2.6 Hollywood funding model and level of government's involvement**

The American cinema or “Hollywood mainstream” cinema is built upon the idea of commercially successful feature films (Shaman, 2000). This model treats film as a product and a good product is able to sell to its market, therefore the audience normally leads the direction of the profit margin.

In the Hollywood model, ticket sales have been interpreted as guidance to determine the success of each project and personnel, with sufficient perceived force to give rise to the notion that ‘you’re as good as your last picture’ (Pager, 2011).

That means directors or producers are considered successful or not based on the performance of their last film at the box office. For this model to be effective, distributors require organizational capacity and geographic scope, both of which benefit from economies of scale. The government therefore does not play a prominent role in this model apart from creating and maintaining favourable market conditions for film producers (Shaman, 2000).

Some film scholars like Botha (2003) argued that a film industry which focused exclusively on maximizing the profit is likely to be shallow and artless. Botha alleged that “although film can be regarded as a commercial product, it should also be seen as a product of culture, such as literature, theatre, plastic art and music” (Botha, 2003, p.

186). This would then justify why film is put on government agendas and not entirely left to market forces.

Generally, approaches like government supported film industries and purely privately controlled or commercially driven industries exist side by side and have proven to work in certain contexts. The Hollywood model could in theory work in Namibia because as long as commercially viable films are produced and properly marketed internationally, it does not matter how small the domestic market is.

However, this model requires huge private investments and skilled workforce at every level of production for best results, and Namibia might not yet have enough of any of the above.

### **2.7 Latin American Telenovelas funding model**

As mentioned in chapter one, the material needed nowadays for development of modern economies comes from our creative minds. Even though grouped under television as opposed to cinema, the telenovela genre was considered for this study as an alternative production and distribution model due to its global impact in exporting Latin American cultures and content, and its popularity with African audiences.

Today *telenovela*, which literally means “television novel”, is considered one of the most popular television program genres that came from Latin America and ‘conquered’ the world (La Pastina, 2003). Needless to say, telenovelas put Latin America on the map in both the entertainment and economic worlds (Rogers and Antola, 1991).

With the fast disappearing movie theatres across Africa and the increasing accessibility and affordability of television sets, which also favor the spread of movies made for home viewing such as in the Nollywood context (Hanyes, 2011), Latin American telenovelas have become one of the most popular entertainment programs on TV in most African countries including Namibia. They have managed to capture African audiences and arguably promote Latin American cultures as well as contribute positively toward the economies of the country of their origin (Straubhaar and La Pastina, 2005).

Straubhaar and La Pastina further argue that even though audiences do tend to choose programs that are most culturally relevant or proximate to them, the flow of telenovelas has managed to spread beyond cultural-linguistic markets to global markets.

The popularity of telenovelas has led to its increased scrutiny among scholars often criticizing the content and its selective representation of society. For instance Artz and Kamalipour (2003) criticized that “indigenous people are often portrayed as underdeveloped, nice to look at, and different from other (middle-class) Spanish-speaking people” (Artz and Kamalipour , 2003 p. 139).

Notwithstanding the content however, as a model, it is possible that the export of African telenovelas is likely to find various audiences including Afro-descendants worldwide, similar to the way Nollywood movies have managed to reach an international audience.

## **Summary**

While in Africa the justification for national cinema among scholars has been mostly about reversing the legacy of colonialism, some European countries have, for decades, been funding local films to protect their national cultures from the domination of the foreign commercial products of Hollywood. Similarly, in Africa, the South African government has been funding films since the establishment of the National Film and Video Foundation as well as formulating policies aimed at developing the national film industry.

However, critics such as Morawetz (2007) and Pager (2011) point out, with regards to some European countries, that the spending of huge amounts of tax payers' money on films without recouping it is unsustainable. They argue that filmmakers tend to depend on state funds and locally produced films often fail to reach a wider audience, which further makes Hollywood stronger as audiences prefer Hollywood films.

Models such as commercially driven industries which are funded privately exist side by side with the government funded film industries and have been proven to work in certain contexts. In theory, the Hollywood model could arguably work in a small populated country such as Namibia provided commercially viable films are produced and properly marketed internationally. However, an enabling environment such as favourable policies, private investments and skilled workforces at every level of production are a pre-requisite for this model.

The Latin American model of Telenovela (television-novel) comes from a context with possibly similar economic and social circumstances to most African countries and might be easier to apply to countries such as Namibia. Namibia, with its small domestic market could consider investing in producing telenovelas for export to other African countries and beyond.

Finally, whether efforts and resources spent on attracting foreign productions to film in African countries have the assumed positive impact on the development of the local film industries remains unproven.



## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter presents the methods used in this study to collect and analyze the data as well as the instruments used to gather the information from different sources. It further discusses how this study addresses the issue of ethics during both the data collection and data analysis phases.

### **3.1 Research design**

In carrying out this research a qualitative research approach was used to collect and analyze the information gathered from various sources.

According to Fouché (2002) in qualitative research approaches, researchers often “develop their own designs as they go along, using one or more of the available strategies or tools as an aid or guideline” (p.271). The major strategy of enquiry used is case study. Case studies, according to Leedy & Ormrod (2005), can shed light on poorly understood situations. Yin (in Baxter& Jack, 2008) advises that one ought to consider case studies as a design when “(a) the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study; (c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context.” (p.545)

This research was driven by the underlying question of how the government of Namibia can support the development of a sustainable film industry.

This cannot be considered without the context of government funding films and the relationship between the industry and the government, which is marked by previous production funding, hence the two chosen cases.

Within the framework of case studies, data collection usually involves multiple sources and in-depth description of the case(s) placing it within a broader context (Fouché, 2002). The case study was deemed as an appropriate approach for explaining the complexity of funding for the local industry by critically analysing two concrete examples in which the Namibian government fully funded two projects with over 80 million Namibia dollars. These two productions were the best choices because they were the first fully funded productions by the Namibian government and therefore serve as relevant cases to help evaluate the state's involvement in the development of the film industry as one possible solution for local film funding.

Interviews with important stakeholders involved in the two productions, along with observation and analysis of documents and of newspaper articles about the two productions were conducted. The data collected from primary and secondary sources enabled a more complete understanding of the historical challenges and future aspirations of industry stakeholders surrounding the government's involvement in the development of the Namibian film industry, from the perspective of the government and film practitioners alike. Available books, online journals, as well as other related information materials on the subject matter were also used.

According to Patton (2002), a qualitative approach is ideal when seeking to produce a wealth of detailed information about a small population as was the case with this study.

This method increases the depth of understanding of the cases and the situation studied but reduces the possibility of generalization.

The study mainly investigated people's experiences, enquiring about the meanings that stakeholders derived from their experiences with regards to the two productions used as case studies for this research.

### **3.2 Sample**

According to Strydom & Delport (2002), in qualitative research mostly non-probability sampling is used departing from the assumption that even if the sample is not quantitatively representative, the case, individuals and groups studied "against the background of more universal social experiences and processes" (p.334) will allow for some inferences based on the experiences of the reader. Specifically, purposeful sampling was used, which is described by Sellers (2007) as a non-random method of sampling, where the researcher selects information-rich cases for in depth study. As mentioned earlier in chapter one, the two selected productions were fully funded by the Namibian government and therefore serve as relevant cases for this study, to help evaluate the state's involvement as one possible solution for the development of the national film industry.

There are also some films that were not funded by the government (mostly funded by NGOs) but as mentioned earlier, they will not be discussed in detail as that would go beyond the scope of this study.

Within the two cases that were chosen, interviews were conducted with filmmakers, producers, and government agencies that were directly or indirectly involved in the two productions. Directly involved such as those involved in the production (crew & cast), the producers, the relevant employees and directors involved in funding and disbursement operations. Further relevant industry stakeholders such as staff and board members of the Namibia Film Commission and relevant members of the Filmmakers Association were interviewed. The researcher selected participants based on their level of involvement and anticipated knowledge about the topic. In order to initially establish and pre-select a number of suitable interviewees, newspaper articles, internet sources, and *minutes* from all Filmmakers Association of Namibia (FAN) meetings since 2009 was used.

To avoid the inherent bias of excluding informants, respondents were asked to refer to other information-rich sources related to the two cases, hence a form of what Mugo (1996) refers to as snowball sampling was applied. As such, a relatively small group of people involved in the two case studies was targeted with an open possibility of leading to other respondents.

The following research questions needed to be answered:

- a) What are the funding needs of the Namibian film industry from producers and key stakeholders?

- b) How effective was government involvement in the production of the two film projects, *Namibia: the Struggle for Liberation* and the TV soap opera *The Ties That Bind*?
- c) How do Namibian film producers and other key stakeholders understand the role the government can play in strengthening the local film industry and the best way such involvement and support can be achieved?
- d) What viable, different funding models exist for the film industry and how suitable are they to the Namibian environment?
- e) What policies and procedures of funding the film industry in Namibia by government and other agencies/corporations can be recommended?

Due to the size of the industry and relative small number of people involved in the two case studies, 21 respondents were interviewed. The respondents specifically came from the following sectors:

(1) Fourteen cultural practitioners and filmmakers were interviewed with the particular intention of getting the perspective of filmmakers who were directly involved in the two productions.

(2) Four government officials from the Namibia Film Commission (NFC) were interviewed because both *Namibia: the Struggle for Liberation* and *The Ties That Bind* were funded through the NFC.

(3) Three Officials from the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) were interviewed to mostly talk about the screening of the two major government funded

projects, especially *The Ties That Bind* of which NBC was a partner. The topic of screening and distribution of the two projects came up in all interviews.

### **3.3 Research instrument and procedure**

It is important to consider what information is expected from the research subjects and how the information is best obtained (Berg, 2001). A combined approach was used including a semi structured interview schedule that used some standardized questions and an unstructured section in the form of observation. “The combined strategy offers the interviewer flexibility in probing and determining when it is appropriate to explore certain subjects in greater depth, or even pose new questions” (Patton, 2002, P. 347).

The advantage of this approach is that it helps save time by providing a framework within which the interviewer can develop questions, sequence those questions and make decisions about which information to peruse in greater depth.

The two projects, *Namibia: the Struggle for Liberation* and *The Ties That Bind* were used as case studies to assess the feasibility of government funding.

A qualitative research approach was used to collect and analyse the information gathered from various sources related to the two selected cases. This involved mostly interviews, and observations done during filmmakers’ meetings. For each interview, a set of questions were prepared beforehand that could guide the conversation, while space was always provided for the conversation to flow freely. The same key questions were asked to all interviewees with different follow up questions depending on the expertise and level of involvement in the two productions in question.

Interviews mostly consisted of open-ended questions allowing a range of responses and “allowing the participants to interpret each question in a variety of ways” (O’reilly, 2005, p. 120). Furthermore, open ended questions allowed for understanding of the film world as seen by the respondents. A sample of interview questions is attached hereto as appendix. To ensure that the information was captured accurately, the interviews were recorded on an audio recorder. In each interview, the interviewees expressed their own opinions and were not necessarily expressing the opinions or views of their employers or affiliates.

The purpose of the study was explained to all respondents before the interviews took place and the identity of each respondent is protected throughout the study by using numbers instead of real names.

As mentioned earlier, respondents were chosen based on their knowledge of the topic linked to their role in the two productions, while other key informants such as industry stakeholders were interviewed based on their involvement in the industry.

Even though not all interviewees were involved in both productions, as industry stakeholders they were asked to comment on both productions. This was done with the assumption that even though they might not have been directly involved in both productions, they might still have an informed opinion given the small size of the industry, which might often lead to indirect involvement via giving advice or exchanging information with those involved in projects. The interviews were carried out

between July 2012 and August 2013 at different places in Windhoek. A total number of 21 respondents were interviewed for this study.

The researcher met each interviewee in a place of their choice, which in most cases was their office or a coffee shop.

In qualitative research design, the data or information gathered is often collected and then constantly analysed and organised which can then lead to more data collection in an almost circular process (de Vos, 2002). Even if the data is not numerical it is organised by describing, classifying and interpreting the collected data to identify “salient themes, recurring ideas, or language patterns of belief that link people and settings together” (de Vos, 2002, p. 344). The information obtained from the 21 participants, for example, was not expressed in numerical form but emphasized, rather, the experiences of participants and the interpretation thereof. Nevertheless, some of the information could be categorized and compared. In the final analysis, examples or in this case quotes and summaries of what interviewees said are presented, while some of the categories and sub-themes can be visualised and graphically presented, as the researcher makes sense of the data (de Vos, 2002). The qualitative researcher must search and constantly challenge the explanations for apparent patterns with alternative explanations (de Vos, 2002). This method of qualitative analysis was also applied in this study.

### **3.4 Research ethics**

Researchers must obtain the informed consent of persons participating in research before the research begins, therefore in this study participants were provided with the



information about the purpose, methods, demands and possible risks or inconveniences of the study (Berg, 2001, Candy, 2006). “The confidentiality of the findings and the protection of the respondents’ identity is important” (Maree & Van Der Westhuizen, 2009, p. 37), particularly considering the small size of the Namibian film industry.

To avoid negative repercussion for respondents, the identity of respondents was not revealed in the report. All subjects were briefed on potential issues and how they would be addressed. Even though some respondents said they would agree to their real names being used, it could potentially have compromised the confidentiality by inference of context. Therefore the interviewees were randomly numbered and the corresponding number for each interviewee was used in the report instead of their real names. This was important because some of the respondents’ comments might have endangered (future) jobs or their reputation.

As mentioned earlier in chapter one, the researcher is a filmmaker and that could potentially bring certain bias, which however did not undermine the integrity of the data collection process and analysis. In fact, this allowed for certain insights and provided easier access to certain sources that a non-filmmaker might have found difficult to access. It was, however, necessary to be aware of this inherent bias especially when respondents were interviewed and when data was analysed. The bias was mitigated by constantly challenging assumptions made with alternative explanations.

Ethical considerations that were subscribed to for this study included that “no harm should come to experimental subjects and/or respondents; that prospective respondents

should give their informed consent; that respondents should not be deceived in any way; and that researchers should be competent and responsible” Strydom, 2002, p.75).

Finally, the ethical considerations also involved the interview recordings being kept in a secure place, locked away on two separate hard drives to which only the researcher would have access. Both the electronic recordings and the notes on the interviews were stored on the same hard drive and only the researcher would have access to them. The recordings and the notes will be held for at least 5 years.

## **CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

This chapter provides an analysis of the collected data guided by the research objectives and research questions.

In order to address the gap in the understanding of how government funding can be better utilised to achieve a sustainable film industry, this chapter evaluates the effectiveness of the government's involvement in the Namibian film industry using the two projects, *Namibia: the Struggle for Liberation* and *The Ties That Bind*.

As previously mentioned, the two productions were chosen as case studies to assess the feasibility and sustainability of government funding of film productions for the development of the Namibian film industry.

Respondents' opinions on the two government funded productions, *Namibia: the Struggle for Liberation* and *The Ties that Bind* are presented to form an argument. This includes the rationale for government involvement and the level of such involvement in the two productions as well as the lessons learned by both the government and the film industry.

The following research objectives served as guidelines for the presentation and analysis of data.

## **1. Funding needs of the Namibian film industry from producers and key stakeholders**

In this section, answers regarding the funding needs of the Namibia film industry and where such funds should come from in an ideal world are presented.

There was a consensus among respondents that one of the major challenges to developing a sustainable film industry is financing. According to *Interviewee 12* funding is not only required for the production process of films but also for the marketing and distribution of Namibian films both locally and internationally.

*Interviewee 8* pointed out that in the absence of sufficient funding, most filmmakers stay afloat by producing NGO films and videos for the corporate sector, commissioned for a particular purpose and use. This response addresses the question of how Namibian filmmakers earn their living. According to *Interviewee 8*, depending on NGO funds is not a sustainable state for Namibian filmmakers.

As mentioned before, the role played by NGOs in the funding of local films is very interesting and worth further investigation to determine whether it can be considered as another possible sustainable option for financing local productions.

There were, however, different opinions among respondents regarding the ideal source of the funds required for the development of the industry.

The majority of respondents believed that funding should come from the government and that it should be the government's social responsibility to fund films. Accordingly,

there was a consensus among respondents regarding the need for more local funding from the government as part of its development obligations. This argument was expanded further by *interviewee 7*, who argued that the Namibian government should include film in its Vision 2030 plans to develop key industries that can provide infrastructure, create jobs as well as reduce poverty. The establishment of the Namibia Film Commission and subsequently the funding of the two productions, *Namibia: the Struggle for Liberation and The Ties That Bind* demonstrated that there is political will on the government side (*interviewee 14*)

In terms of government funding, *Interviewee 11* pointed out that the Namibia Film Commission has made provision for the Film and Video Fund which has funding criteria that clearly stipulates how the funds should be used by the NFC on behalf of the government; who is eligible; what projects should be funded; and how the money should be disbursed. It was difficult to establish, however, if the criteria was followed during the two government funded projects. This might be due to what *Interviewee 17* referred to as a lack of transparency of the mechanisms, or a lack of reporting by those involved in such mechanisms.

## **2. Evaluate the nature and effectiveness of the government's involvement in the two projects.**

In this section, the nature and effectiveness of the government's involvement in the film industry were evaluated, discussing media coverage along with interviewees' opinions

about the contribution the two productions made toward the development of the local industry.

As part of the questions that were meant to help assess whether the interviewees perceived the impact of the two productions positively or negatively, interviewees were asked to give a grade between 1 and 10 (1 if they considered the production an absolute failure and 10 if they considered the production an absolute success, and the numbers in between accordingly).

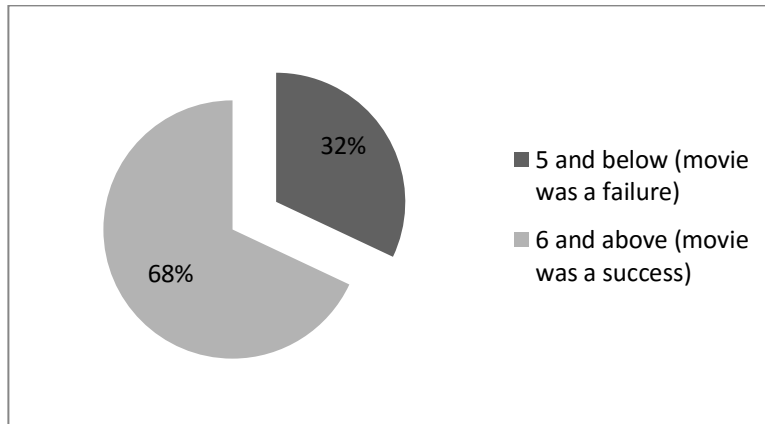
Unfortunately, only a minority of interviewees were able to grade *The Ties that Bind* and the majority failed to do so, citing the fact that they had not watched the TV series as one of the reasons for their inability to give a rating.

For *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* however, interviewees generally assessed the impact of the film rather positively when they had to express it numerically.

Table 1: Interviewees assessing success/failure of *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation*

Grade given (1-failure 10-success)	Number of interviewees
1	-
2	-
3	4
4	1
5	1
6	4
7	4
8	3
9	2
10	-
Not scored	2

None of the interviewees seemed to have felt the film was an absolute failure. Out of the 19 that evaluated the production, 13 felt it was quite successful, scoring between 6 and 9, despite the challenges and criticism that were elicited during the interviews and which will be further highlighted in the following sub-section.



**Figure 1 Interviewees assessing success/failure of *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* in percentages**

**(a) *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation***

In this sub section some background about the making of this film and the rationale for the government's funding are briefly outlined. Secondly, interview answers are summarized with a focus on the main discussions emanating from most interviews, condensed to the question about the degree of creative freedom that was left to the production teams and filmmakers, and how far government engagement with the process was considered as interference.

*Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* was the first ever Namibian feature film to be fully funded by the Namibian government at an estimated cost of more than 90 million Namibia dollars (equivalent to about 10 million US\$ at the time of the production).



“The first round of funding was made available through the Pan African Centre of Namibia (PACON), which initiated the idea of producing the autobiography as an epic film on the life of the first Namibian president, Dr Sam Nujoma” (*Interviewee 2*).

Dr Sam Nujoma is an important political figure, who was given the title of the “founding father” of the Namibian Nation in 2005, the same year the film was made. “The funding was then later administered through the Namibia Film Commission” (*Interviewee 6, & Interviewee 2*). The decision to change the funding administration from PACON to the NFC was due to the alleged mismanagement of funds by PACON.

According to *Interviewee 10*, the rationale for making this film was “to produce a Pan-African film that tells the story of how Namibia got its independence”. *Interviewee 6* stated that this film was initiated by PACON with its Pan African vision and mission to produce a film that told the events around the Namibian struggle for liberation, while recognizing other African countries and individuals that played a role in that struggle.

As such the film could be seen as a Pan African project, not only recognizing the pioneers of the Pan African Movement but also having employed black people from different countries in Africa and the diaspora (*Interviewee 10 and Interviewee 12*). For instance, the film was directed by award winning African-American director Charles Burnett and starred renowned African American actors such as Danny Glover and Carl Lumbly. As a result, the production of the film itself created hype due to its magnitude and its political content (*Interviewee 2*).

According to *Interviewee 11*, the film was the first to be made about Namibia's recent history and there were expectations that it would jumpstart the Namibian film industry.

Whether those expectations were met is discussed later in this study.

Some interviewees linked the government's need to have some control over the way the people and the story were portrayed to the content of the film, that is it being an auto-biography about the then President and the very recent history of Namibia. For instance, a 'political committee' was established to ensure that the script reflected the story accurately (*Interviewee 10*).

*Interviewee 2* added that politicians also played a role in ensuring that the money was available to finish the film, apart from producers being expected to consult with the political committee on the accuracy of the story. This suggests that there was a good degree of convolution of roles. Political stakeholders seemed to have been involved in the creative process of the film, at least regarding the film's script.

While the film was based on an auto-biography, some interviewees were of the opinion that it should have included all significant figures more accurately, rather than just a representation of one person's perspective. *Interviewee 15* stated, for instance, that the film did not give credit to all Namibian freedom fighters and that the story was edited during the filming process from its original content due to changes in the political climate. For example, "there were incidents during the production where some of the characters were removed from the story to satisfy the political interests of the day" (*Interviewee 6*).

While it is evident that some well-known figures who also played a crucial role during the struggle for liberation did not appear in the film, it is not clear whether they were deliberately removed and whether their omission was politically motivated or a creative choice by filmmakers.

Irrespective of whether the film represented reality, other interviewees such as *Interviewee 5 & 11* felt that “the film did not do justice to the autobiography by introducing fictitious characters and storylines, for instance” (*Interviewee 11*).

The introduction of fictitious characters that were neither part of the autobiography nor part of the actual accounts of struggle history (*Interviewee 1* and *Interviewee 2*) such as the character of “Father Elias” played by Danny Glover would suggest that the filmmakers had some creative control of the story and that the political committee did not insist on all the aspects of the script being based on reality or the actual autobiography.

*Interviewee 19* argued that it was a difficult undertaking for the creative team to produce a film that pleased everyone, given the fact that most of the characters in the story were still alive when this film was made (*Interviewee 19*).

So while filmmakers often have to deal with different interpretations of a fictitious story, in this case it might also have meant that the people involved in the actual events might have had different versions of how the events occurred and all could not be accommodated.

Other than the issue of content and the involvement of government or politicians specifically in the creative process, *Interviewee 2* also pointed towards the

administrative difficulties whereby systems of accounting were applied that may have not been conducive to the needs of films. For instance, one of the interviewees specified that “the government should have only provided a guideline of accounting for checks and balances instead of participating in the daily disbursement of funds where producers were expected to always bring 3 quotations before the money was released” (*Interviewee 1*).

Interviewees’ opinions were divided about whether *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* contributed to the development of the local film industry. However, there was a consensus among interviewees that the film made a positive contribution toward the development of the local skills of cast and crew that worked on the film.

The minority of *Interviewees* were more critical towards the production and questioned the contribution of the film towards the development of the industry mainly due to the fact that thereafter the government did not make such a substantial contribution towards the local film industry again.

According to *Interviewee 3 and Interviewee 5*, the controversies that surrounded the film, especially the lack of financial accountability, painted a negative image of the local film industry. Moreover, the film was already in the media for adverse reasons at the beginning of the production due to demonstrations by crew and cast that were not paid on time as per signed agreements (*Interviewee 4*).

Conversely, others argued that the production of the film, *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* alone was a learning curve for both the Namibian government and the film

industry. For instance *Interviewee 17* stated that “the industry as well as the government learned about the necessity of planning [before, during, after filming], the necessity to meet legal requirements throughout, and financial accountability and transparency” (*Interviewee 17*).

According to *Interviewee 2*, the film contributed to capacity building as it employed a large number of Namibians who were then exposed to international standards of filmmaking. Furthermore, *Interviewee 6* pointed out that the film won international awards which raised awareness of Namibia as a possible filming location as well as created exposure of local talent to international audiences.

“The film also helped to sensitize the Namibian public at large about filmmaking in Namibia; even those who were never interested in filmmaking were attracted to this film through its media controversy” (*Interviewee 19*).

Those that felt the film did not contribute to the development of the industry argued that “it was rather damaging to the industry and took the industry’s efforts a few steps back” (*Interviewee 11 and Interviewee 16*).

The same interviewees (*Interviewee 11 and Interviewee 16*) further stated that “in 2005 the industry was first given 20 million Namibian dollars as part of the Film Development Fund which was then used up for *Namibia: the Struggle for Liberation* exclusively, and after the film, the government became reluctant and sceptical to further fund the film industry.”

Another interviewee agreed that “after the movie *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* was completed, filmmakers have since been competing for limited small grants made available by the government through the Namibia Film Commission for short film productions” (*Interviewee 4*).

*Interviewee 15*, therefore, posed this question, “How could one convince the government to further fund the local films if the film industry was given a chance when the government invested the money that was mismanaged in the end and there was nothing substantial to show for it?” (*Interviewee 15*)

One interviewee however, alleged that it was only due to the nature and content of the story that the government made such large amounts available in the first place. “Considering the amount provided by the Namibian government and how the money was easily made available, it would not have been the case if the movie was about any other story” (*Interviewee 16*).

This would suggest that it is not due to mismanagement of funds that such a large amount was not made available again but that, in itself, the movie was a unique exception.

According to *Interviewee 5*, certain media reports had a negative impact on the public opinion of the local film industry. “After reports on the mismanagement of funds in local media, the Namibian Parliament appointed a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Accounts to investigate the reports and this investigation is still continuing six years after the film was completed” (*Interviewee 3*).

*Interviewee 4* noted that the Commission of Enquiry consisted of members that do not have any experience in the field of filmmaking and could not be expected to ask the right questions.

“They expect to scrutinize the budgeting and accounting for film the same way it's done in other sectors”(*Interviewee 4*). According to *Interviewee 19* the outcome of the Commission of inquiry is still inconclusive.

“After a series of negative media reports about the mismanagement of funds on both productions, filmmakers must now prove themselves 10 times over because both the general public and the government have lost confidence” (*Interviewee 17*).

Another interviewee stated that “we are living in one global village where an article published in Namibia can be accessed anywhere in the world just on a click of a button and any negative news reports about Namibia influence opinions beyond Namibia” (*Interviewee 13*). According to *Interviewee 5*, this could also have an effect on potential funders both locally and internationally.

However, the Namibian government, through the Namibia Film Commission (NFC) has funded 21 film projects since 2010 with an estimated total budget of N\$ 9 million (*Interview 21*).

The most successful films were the seven NFC funded short films that were produced in 2011-2012 (*Interviewee 16 and Interviewee 17*). These short films enjoyed positive media reports, and they were screened both locally and internationally, some even winning awards. Furthermore, the productions were run without reported

mismanagement of funds (*Interviewee 21*). This might have also restored some of the confidence in the local film industry.

In summary, there were some interviewees who criticized the film and its contribution towards the development of the local industry due to negative media reports. These particular interviewees saw the fact that the government did not put such substantial funding in any other films again as proof and consequence of the negative publicity surrounding the film. However, the majority of interviewees argued in favour of the film and argued that it was a learning curve for both the government and the film industry as it exposed them to international standards of film making.

In this study interviewees were asked to share their opinions regarding distribution of the two film projects, *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* and *The Ties That Bind*.

The majority of the interviewees believed that the film, *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* was not produced to make money but rather as a historical monument that paid tribute to the liberation struggle and its heroes, hence they did not expect the government to take a commercial approach. The above argument suggests that the film was not produced with the aim to make a profit hence commercial distribution would not have been a priority.

However, there are also other interviewees such as *Interviewee 6*, and *Interviewee 12* who argued that the film was made with the intention to make money which is why the



producers hired an American director and famous Hollywood actors such as Danny Glover (*Interviewee 6 and Interviewee 12*).

*Interviewee 6* posed the question: Why and how did it fail to recoup the money spent? Some interviewees pointed at the disagreement between the Pan African Centre of Namibia (PACON) and the Namibia Film Commission (NFC) as a possible explanation for poor distribution. “After the film *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* was done, there were conflicts between the PACON and NFC about who should own the rights to the film, which affected the film’s distribution” (*Interviewee 2*). “Currently, the Namibia Film Commission holds the right to the film *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation*” (*Interviewee 21*).

It was not clear in what particular way the conflict between PACON and NFC affected the distribution of the film, but one can assume that the film might have suffered from the timing of the disagreement as it might have been a bit too late to achieve maximum distribution and garner significant exposure when an agreement was finally reached regarding the ownership of the rights.. The other possibility would be that the NFC had neither the capacity nor distribution strategies in place when they won the copyright battle over PACON. Of course, the negative media publicity might have also contributed to the distribution apathy of the film.

According to *Interviewee 11*, the film was then handed over to a French distribution agency called 'Cinema Libre Studios' in 2011 for the period of 5 years, ending in 2015, but there has not been any report given on the progress of distribution.

This was also confirmed by *Interviewee 21* who stated that "the NFC did not make any money from the film and all the invested amount of money was not recouped".

Furthermore, copies of the film were not available locally for Namibian audiences at the time of this study.

*Interviewee 15* stressed that even though the film was shown on MNET (African Magic Channel) it was still not available locally.

According to *Interviewee 7* the NFC was aware that the film was shown on MNET Magic and that DVDs were available for sale in Germany. It was however not clear who sold the right to MNET and where the money from the sale went.

Even though the NFC owned the rights to the film, there seemed to be some apathy in making sure that the film was distributed both locally and internationally (*Interview 15*). This could be because NFC is now being administered by new people, who were not involved in the controversial production and might wish to focus on their own projects.

In summary, the fact that the producers of the film hired film experts from the United States of America such as the director Charles Burnett and famous actor Danny Glover suggests some sort of distribution strategy. Moreover, the film was given to the French distribution agency, 'Cinema Libre Studios' for international distribution which implies

that the producers were hoping to distribute the film globally and subsequently make a profit. It is however not clear why that was not the case.

***(b) The Ties That Bind***

In 2007, the Namibia Film Commission in partnership with the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) put out a call in the media for local production companies to submit proposals to produce the first Namibian Television soap opera (*Interviewee 14*). On the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2007 the local newspaper, *New Era*, reported that a local production company, “Optimedia”, was selected and awarded the tender to produce the 26-part soap opera.

*Interviewee 1* stated that the commissioning of this soap opera was done through collaboration between the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) and the NFC. This was the first Namibian television soap opera and it was funded by the Namibian government through the Namibia Film Commission with a budget of N\$5 million, according to *Interviewee 4*. According to *Interviewee 18*, only 13 episodes out of the 26 required episodes were produced and broadcasted on NBC. Moreover, the 13 episodes were not available anywhere in the local market at the time of this study.

Generally, interviewees expressed their disappointment with the outcome of the soap opera and seemed convinced that the project did not contribute towards the development of the Namibian film industry (*Interviewee 3 and Interviewee 15*). There were insinuations and frustrations about the project allegedly employing a large number of

foreign crew instead of Namibian crew, which is why the interviewees assumed that the funds were insufficient (*Interviewee 15*).

One interviewee suggested that *The Ties That Bind* was a case of a creative person being overtaken by passion and jumping into production too quickly, without proper planning and proper resources (*interviewee 1*).

Another interviewee linked the television soap opera production to the feature film production by saying that, “*The Ties That Bind* was simply a continuation of *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* in terms of where the funds came from, media reports on the mismanagement of funds, and that it was the same producer in both productions” (*Interviewee 3*). *Interviewee 8* added that in both productions, the producers were given the requested amount of money and kept coming back for more without delivering on the agreement.

With *The Ties That Bind* in particular, *Interviewee 8* further alleged that there was a breach of contract where producers failed to deliver the agreed 26 episodes.

In contradiction, *Interviewee 1* asserted that the NFC did not have the amount of money required to produce all 26 episodes and ended up disbursing only 60% of the required budget. Neither arguments were refuted or confirmed by the NFC.

In Summary, most interviewees were not satisfied with the outcome of the soap opera and seemed convinced that it did not contribute towards the development of the

Namibian film industry. The Interviewees further criticized the approach of employing foreign crew who allegedly turned out to be more expensive than local crew.

Therefore, in comparison to *The Ties That Bind*, the feature film *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation*, a much larger scale project, contributed more towards the development of the local film industry despite its shortcomings.

**Lessons learned: *The Ties That Bind* and *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation***

While most interviewees criticized the two film projects especially with regards to what went wrong, they also acknowledged that some valuable lessons were learned.

For instance, one of the interviewees stated that “ in a rather unusual way, the two productions, *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* and *The Ties That Bind* clearly demonstrated and taught Namibian filmmakers what NOT to do when producing a film” (*Interviewee 17*). Moreover, *Interviewee 9* stated that “the government in particular, learnt about how expensive it is to produce a feature as well as the required timeframe needed to complete it”.

*Interviewee 1* agreed that the experiences from the process of producing the two productions highlighted the importance of planning and the need for a clear distribution of roles between the NFC and filmmakers, as well as the importance of having a realistic budget in place before jumping into production to avoid disappointments.

“ On both productions, *The Ties That Bind* and *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation*, the disbursement process of the funds was very slow and complicated, leaving the producers with little cash flow during the production which often led to protests on set

that would then cost the production even more money in the end” (*Interviewee 1*).

Most of the inconveniences could have been avoided according to *Interviewee 17*, if both the producers and the Namibia Film Commission had been more experienced at the time.

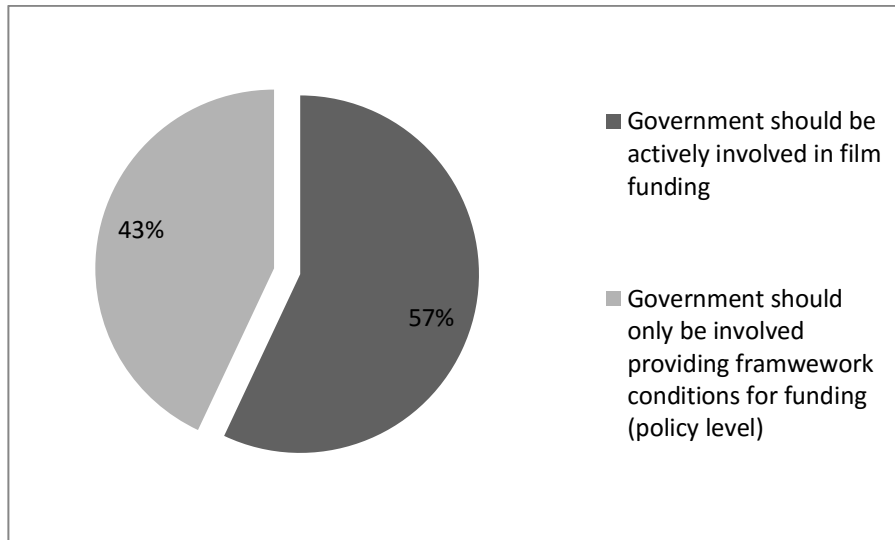
Another notable lesson was the importance of the distribution of film projects once they are done (*Interviewee 3*). *Interviewee 11* suggested that clear policies are needed to provide NFC with criteria for employment ensuring that the right people are employed and that systems of accountability are in place to prevent further mismanagement of limited resources.

This suggestion would address the concerns from some of the interviewees who pointed out that local producers on both productions did not have adequate experience therefore there were questions regarding the employment criteria used to recruit them.

In Summary, there seems to be enough evidence that suggests that local stakeholders have learned from the process of producing the two projects, especially the importance of planning before production to avoid unnecessary inconveniences. For instance, lessons were learned about budgeting and disbursement of funds in a suitable manner. The production of 7 short films in 2012 seemed to have overcome the challenge of alleged mismanagement of funds faced by the 2 discussed projects.

### **3. Industry stakeholders’ perception on the role government can play in strengthening the local film.**

As aforementioned, most interviewees felt that the government should be more involved in the development of the Namibian film industry. However, there is no consensus on the nature of this involvement.



**Figure 2 Interviewee opinions on the type of government involvement needed**

More than half of the interviewees (12 out of 21) felt that the government should be actively involved in film funding in Namibia, while the remaining 9 felt that the government should only be involved in the formulation of policies that regulate the industry.

For instance, *interviewee 20* highlighted that film is part of arts and culture and that it is the responsibility of every government to support its development. This argument was supported by *Interviewee 8* who stated that “the government should see art and film, in particular, as an important medium to educate the nation about social issues”.

Furthermore, it is therefore within the interest of the government, according to *Interviewee 7*, to have a fully functioning film industry because the output of the film industry mirrors the output of most governmental ministries.

*Interviewee 7* supported the argument by arguing that if properly supported, Namibian films could promote Namibia internationally as well as contribute towards the national economy. Therefore, *Interviewee 17* stated that “the Namibian government should continue funding the development of the local film industry until the industry reaches the point where the private sector can take over”. He further argued that ‘film’ is a powerful medium and should not depend on foreign funding alone as that often comes with strings attached. This argument suggests that government funding is necessary to reduce the dependence of local filmmakers on foreign funding.

There are, however, opposing arguments from interviewees who felt that filmmakers should be cautious when assuming government should fund films as this can equally create dependency. *Interviewee 18* argued, for instance, that “government funding also creates dependency and filmmakers need to explore other funding alternatives”. He further added that “sustainability is about empowerment and the government should rather assist with developing the capacity of the filmmakers as strategic partners instead of spoon-feeding them”.

*Interviewee 5* argued along the same lines and stressed that it is not sustainable for filmmakers to rely on government funding alone because the value of film is not widely understood by government which is reflected in Namibia’s small annual budgetary



allocation to film funding. This line of argument suggests that not only would it be expensive for the government to sustainably fund the film industry but also that the rationale about the value of film is not widely understood.

Moreover, *Interviewee 18* pointed out that the government might have an agenda of its own that can interfere with filmmakers' creative freedom. *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* was a good example of a film that was funded by the government and in which politicians seemed to have interfered with creative decisions.

Furthermore, some interviewees expressed concerns about the possibility of a skewed sense of entitlement when accessing public funds and the accountability required. For instance, *Interviewee 15* stressed that "some Namibians might feel entitled to access that money whether they have filmmaking experience or not". This argument is supported by *Interviewee 16* who further argued that filmmakers might also not apply the same methods of accountability to state funds that they would for private funds.

In summary, most interviewees argued that the government stands to benefit from a flourishing film industry. They pointed towards the 'power' of film as a medium that can promote the country internationally as well as contribute to the economy.

Others further argued that the government has a moral obligation to support the development of the film industry by providing funds. This moral reasoning for the government to fund films is in line with the Namibia Film Commission Act of 2000, recognizing the need for the government to establish a Film and Video Development Fund to develop the local film industry.

There are however concerns of possible consequences, such as dependency, that might not be sustainable in the long run. For instance, if filmmakers are only dependant on government funding they might not be pro-active in finding other funding alternatives and they might not make enough effort to produce commercial films.

Moreover, some interviewees also feared that the government could use their funding privileges to interfere in the creative process.

#### **4. Assess the viability of different funding models and their suitability to the Namibian environment**

Considering Namibia's demographics of a small, predominantly rural population, an effective funding model or models are required. This section presents answers from discussions with interviewees on possible alternative funding models that could work in Namibia.

A number of the interviewees felt strongly about the idea that the film industry should not depend on the government for funding as this dependency might limit filmmakers' ability to look for alternative funding, as well as prevent them from producing commercial products. For example, *Interviewee 14* stated that the only sustainable way for filmmakers to avoid relying on government funding would be to learn how to raise funds on their own. One suggested solution was that local filmmakers should approach established distribution channels via companies such as Ster-Kinekor theatres and convince them to buy the distribution rights before the film is shot which would enable filmmakers to make films and guarantee them distribution (*Interviewee 17*).

*Interviewee 15* noted that to be taken seriously, filmmakers need to collaborate and approach funders as a collective entity instead of taking an individualistic approach. . This could mean that filmmakers pull their resources and skills together to produce films.

Some interviewees had more ideas on how alternative sources of funds for films could be explored and how the government could facilitate that process. For instance, *Interviewee 12* suggested that “the government can take tax concessions from private companies in industries like construction, mining and fishing and companies can be charged as little as 1% which will then go to the development of the film industry”.

Another suggested method of financing the production of local films was through the signing of co-production treaties between Namibia and other film industries, which would allow local filmmakers to qualify for film funds outside Namibia (*Interviewee 18*).

Generally co-production means that two or more film producers agree to collaborate and pool resources together in order to produce a project that either of the co-producers would find difficult to achieve alone. Some interviewees also pointed out another emerging model of self-funded Namibian filmmakers, who mostly produce their micro-budget feature-films in local languages targeting specific language audiences (*Interviewee 7*). Generally, these films are of poor quality and are produced at almost no cost as often the filmmakers do not have enough funds or formal training in the field of filmmaking.

However, according to *Interviewee 17*, these films still manage to establish a viable local distribution and marketing model that enables the filmmakers to earn a living. This model is interesting because filmmakers are supposed to be entrepreneurs who are, in this context, not waiting for any funding agency to fund their films. They produce what they feel their audience would be happy to pay for (commercial products) therefore creating a market for themselves. Established filmmakers on the other hand, even the ones with good quality short films that get international exposure, are still struggling to sell or distribute their films locally therefore failing to earn a living from their films (*Interviewee 11*).

In summary, there was general consensus about the importance of seeking funding apart from the government and some interviewees gave different ideas on how and where alternative funds for films could be sourced. Suggestions such as tax concessions from the mining industry, partnering with cinema lines in the country such as Ster-Kinekor, co-production between Namibia and other film industries as well as collaboration between filmmakers were given. Most of the interviewees believe that the government still has a role to play which includes drafting and establishing policies that can implement suggestions such as tax incentives, and facilitating co-production agreements with other industries.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

This chapter discusses the findings in the context of literature reviewed, providing interpretation guided by the research objectives.

In the framework of trying to establish how the government can best get involved in the development of the industry, the mode of government involvement is discussed based on the findings in this regard. The study further discussed the viability of different funding models for the film industry that were introduced in the literature review and assessed their suitability for the Namibian environment against the background of the findings presented in chapter four.

### **Establishing the funding needs for the Namibian film industry**

The study found out that the Namibian film industry needs sufficient funds to produce films and distribute them, as well as for developing skills at different levels of film production. There seems to be a general need for more funding in the industry but marketing and distribution are particularly neglected. This can be especially problematic as it also means that the industry will never really be self-sustainable by re-investing money made from distribution back into the production.

The majority of interviewees felt that the government needs to put more funds into the development of the local film industry. Some, such as *Interviewee 3* see it as the government's moral responsibility to support the local film industry as part of their mandate for nation building and national identity.

This is in line with Thiec (2009), who pointed out that the local film industry could also play a key role in nation-building by ensuring due respect for cultural diversity, traditions and national heritage (Thiec, 2009).

One could argue that in countries like France, Germany and South Africa there is a similar rationale for supporting the local film industry that is more about developing or safeguarding the development of local cultural expression rather than making profit. These European countries have been funding their film industries and applying restrictive barriers on foreign films entering the local market with the aim to promote a home-grown film industry that can withstand Hollywood domination (Morawetz, 2007 & Payer, 2011). In this line of argument, promotion and development of a home-grown film industry are the keys to counter foreign products or more positively put, are the key elements in the promotion of local products and identities. Similarly Bomba (2010) stressed the importance of the availability of local financing such as government funding to decrease the dependence on Western funding and maintain control over the content. This could be particularly relevant in Namibia where the majority of filmmakers seem to survive on producing NGO and corporate films in which case the clients decide on the content.

Other interviewees felt that the government should support the development of the industry for a different reason. They felt it was in the government's interest to support the local industry as it could further economic development just as other industries. *Interviewee 7* stressed the importance of film and argued that the Namibian government should include film in its Vision 2030 plans as one of the key industries that can provide

employment and reduce poverty. This would be in line with literature indicating that the assets of modern economy come out of our creative minds and not out of the ground therefore potentially making imagination and creativity a key to economic development (Devon and Torbay Council et al., 2006).

The American film industry (Bond, 2013) as well as the Nigerian film industry (Haynes, 2011; Abraham, 2014) are a good example of a creative industry contributing immensely to economic and human development. However, in both the American and Nigerian cases, the funding does not come directly from the government.

Interviewees were aware that sole reliance on the government might not be the best option for Namibian filmmakers. One major drawback that was pointed out by interviewees with regards to government funding in Namibia was the fact that it was largely obscure, and procedures and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation weren't applied and/or in place. The different models are discussed below.

**Evaluate the nature and effectiveness of government's involvement in the production of the two productions.**

One of the main issues that emerged from the analysis of the two productions is a general lack of access to information and record keeping, which made it difficult to assess and evaluate information and opinions given by interviewees, which were at times contradictory.

This might be linked to a general lack of transparency of mechanisms and institutions such as the NFC and a lack of reporting by those involved in such mechanisms (*Interviewee 17*).

With regards to the television series for instance, there was on the one hand a claim that the full amount was disbursed without the delivery of all the episodes, while on the other hand, it was claimed that only a portion of the funds had been made available (*Interviewee 1*). Since this was neither confirmed nor denied by the Namibia Film Commission, it was difficult to further assess whether there was a mismanagement of funds on the side of the filmmakers or administrative problems on the side of the government. Furthermore, verifying whether a set of reasonable deliveries were put in place and used to guide the disbursement of funds was equally problematic. It is also unclear how far and/or how successfully *Namibia: The struggle for liberation* was distributed.

Respondents attributed some of the problems on both productions to the inexperience of the producers and the representatives of the Namibia Film Commission (NFC) (*Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 17*). In that regards, the South African equivalent of NFC, the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) could serve as an example. For instance, the NFVF is managed by qualified experts in relevant fields, who are selected through transparent processes, while the NFC board is managed by individuals appointed by the Minister of Information Communication Technology at his/her discretion. Using the NFVF's employment criteria could potentially secure more experienced professionals for decision making positions within the NFC.



In the case of the two productions and particularly in the case of the feature film, inexperience or possibly misunderstanding about the roles and responsibilities of the government represented by NFC might have translated into interference with the production and or unworkable requirements.

As a possible solution, *Interviewee 11* and *Interviewee 1* stressed the need to (re)define the relationship between the government and the film industry regarding roles and responsibilities.

According to *Interviewee 1* and *Interviewee 2* some of the government accounting rules such as providing 3 quotes before paying for a service provider or for government to be involved in the daily disbursement process are simply not conducive to a filming reality during production. At the same time, it needs to be taken into account that the government has to find ways to ensure that public funds are spent responsibly.

Overall, there is a need to come up with effective disbursement procedures and mechanisms for accountability that are workable for both parties.

While inexperience might have been one reason for interference, interviewees also pointed towards the content of the film and its political nature. In the process of filming, politicians were involved in securing funding for the completion of the film according to *Interviewee 2*, while at the same time certain individuals were edited out of the script coinciding with the politics of the day.

Although it remains unclear whether this was a decision made by the filmmakers or a directive that came from government, it is apparent that in the making of the feature film the government was quite directly involved.

One aspect that interviewees bemoaned was the apparent lack of consideration for distribution with regards to the two productions (*Interviewee 3; Interviewee 1*). In line with that, no records seem to exist about audiences or potential audiences or sales. It is still not clear how many people, both in Namibia and outside Namibia got to see the state funded projects and whether profits were made or who received the profits with regards to the feature film. As there are no records or assessments and evaluation, it is difficult to measure the progress of the industry and to look for more funding from both the government and the private sector.

Some interviewees concluded that producers have focused more efforts on making films and neglected the marketing and distribution part. Evidently, there was a lack of planning with regards to distribution of the feature film *Namibia: the Struggle for Liberation* even though some interviewees saw the hiring of a renowned African American director as at least the indication that there was a hope for more exposure and or distribution. However, that does not amount to a strategy.

When assessing the effectiveness of the government's involvement in the two productions it is important to consider why the government got involved. The film could be seen as a project that was meant to negotiate new national identity by dealing with the recent colonial past.

According to *Interviewee 2*, the government wanted to produce a Pan-African film that told the story of how Namibia gained its independence from the South African Colonial regime. This would be in line with the post-colonial discourse of African cinema that appeared some 50 years ago in other African countries that had gained independence earlier. According to Murpehy, (2000) and Armes, (2006), their films dealt mostly with the consequences of colonialism.

In the Namibian case, *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* was one interpretation of recent history based on the autobiography written by the Founding Father Sam Nujoma. There seems to have been, however, different expectations attached to the film's content from politicians as well as from filmmakers and the public at large. For instance, the film was criticised for its alleged inaccuracy of content and perspective (*Interviewee 15*). This was reflected partially by comments such as those from *Interviewee 11* who criticized the film for not covering certain personalities or events and for making up fictional characters.

Conversely, one could argue that an autobiographical film might not need to take all views into account by its very nature.

Notwithstanding the above mentioned challenges, most respondents believe that *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* specifically contributed to the development of the local film industry by exposing both the industry and the government to international practices of filmmaking.

For example, *Interviewee 3* believed that industry stakeholders learned from the process of producing the two film projects, especially regarding the importance of planning,

distribution, budgeting, as well as the disbursement of funds in a suitable manner. However, government involvement in the film industry could be more effective.

**Assess perceptions of key stakeholders on the role government can play in strengthening the local film industry.**

Generally, most interviewees believed that the Namibian film industry has the potential to grow faster than it currently does, provided that the right people would be in decision making positions particularly at NFC board level. Interviewees agreed that the government has a role to play but did not agree on what that role should be.

On the one hand, a better mode of engagement was proposed as one with more transparent guidelines whereby government would play a facilitating rather than interfering role. For this to work, the relationship between the government and the film industry regarding roles and responsibilities might have to be established and agreed upon as suggested by *Interviewees I&II*.

As aforementioned, some interviewees believed that the government has the responsibility to fund the production of films and this argument was more in line with arguments for film funding in other countries such as South Africa, Germany and France. In the European context discussed in the literature review, for instance, the government is expected to get directly involved to counter Hollywood (Morawetz , 2007, Pager, 2011) .

In contrast, other interviewees argued that the government could be involved by creating a favourable policy framework that encourages the private sector to invest in the local film industry. As a result of the alleged government interference during the feature film

production, *Interviewee 5* concluded that government should play a facilitating role and allow the creative process to take place without interference. In fact, that is what the government is expected to do. The Hollywood framework is an example of this, where the government provides favourable incentives for investment in the film industry (Sanogo, 2015).

Some interviewees suggested that the government through the Film Commission could facilitate co-production treaties between Namibia and other film industries that allow local filmmakers to share resources and exchange skills. In that regards, the South African equivalent of NFC, the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) could once again serve as an example. The South African government through the NFVF facilitates co-production treaties with other countries to pool skills and resources to produce films and later access the audiences of both co-producing countries.

According to the NFVF report of 2013, South Africa had entered into co - production treaties with a total of 8 countries namely: United Kingdom, France, Australia, Ireland, Italy, Canada, Germany and New Zealand.

**Assess the viability of different funding models for the Namibian environment.**

Even though the majority of interviewees believe that the government should invest more in funding the development of the local film industry as indicated earlier, there were at least 40% of the interviewees who felt strongly that the film industry should not only depend on the government for funding.

One of the reasons provided was that relying on government funding limited filmmakers' readiness to look for alternative funding as well as preventing them from producing commercially viable products.

*Interviewee 14* stated that the only sustainable way for filmmakers to avoid relying on government funding would be to learn how to raise funds on their own and most importantly, as a consequence, to look for a sustainable way to produce content. This implies that filmmakers relying on government funding might not concern themselves enough with marketing and distributing their products to raise funds for their next project.

This argument is in line with Morawetz (2007) who argued, with regards to Europe, that despite the generous public support, most film industries in Europe still remain commercially unviable largely because of a failure to attract audiences for their films. As a result, according to Pager (2011), European films are forced to rely on reviews by critics to generate publicity, reinforcing their tendency to value praise from cultural elites over popular audiences. Both Morawetz and Pager suggested that even though European filmmakers get financial support from their respective governments, their films often fail to attract a wider audience. Similarly, in South Africa, filmmakers still struggle to reach local audiences despite the NFVF funding of films, and there have been calls for more investment into the creation of cinema culture and into the growth of local audiences (Botha, 2008).

The Namibian government might not be able to invest the same amount of money into the development of the local film industry as most European countries but interviewees

discussed possible ways the government could raise funds for the development of the industry. Some interviewees suggested that the Namibian government should charge tax concessions from private companies in booming industries such as construction, mining and fishing to raise funds for films. *Interviewee 12* stated that companies can be charged as little as 1% from their profit which will then go to the development of the film industry.

Another suggested method of financing film productions was through the signing of co-production treaties between Namibia and other film industries, which would allow local filmmakers to qualify for film funds outside Namibia (*Interviewee 18*). The Namibia Film Commission could play a major role in facilitating the process of signing co-production treaties with other industries.

Generally co-production means that two or more film producers agree to collaborate and pool resources together in order to produce a project that either of the co-producers alone would find difficult to achieve in any other way.

Finally, the role of the national broadcaster in commissioning the production of local films as well as showing locally produced films to a wider audience needs to be strengthened. In Namibia, the government demands for local content on NBC mostly come without making financial commitments hence the NBC often cannot afford to produce local content (*Interviewee 19, 2013*).

As a result, the NBC ends up importing a bulk of content such as Latin American telenovelas and old Hollywood films at cheaper prices compared to what local producers would ask if they were fairly compensated for their work.

If well managed, local television broadcasters can even produce TV programs that can be exported internationally earning them revenue. A good example is the television programs mostly from Latin America called “Telenovelas”. Literature revealed that the export market for Latin American telenovelas is estimated at bringing a profit of billions of US Dollars (La Pastina, 2003). Close to Namibia, the South African Soap Opera “Generations” and the Zambian Television series “Gabanana” also managed to penetrate the market of neighbouring countries possibly due to the linguistic and cultural proximity.

This Television genre is included in this study as a possible model for Namibia, seeing that cinema theatres across Africa, and Namibia in particular, have been turned into churches making it reasonable to consider TV as an important platform to reach African audiences. Some interviewees also pointed out another emerging model of self-funded Namibian filmmakers, who mostly produce their micro-budget feature-films in local languages, targeting specific language audiences.

According to *Interviewee 7*, these films are of poor quality as often the filmmakers do not have enough funds or formal training in the field of filmmaking, and they are produced at almost no cost. However, these films still managed to establish a viable local distribution and marketing model that earns the filmmakers a living (*Interviewee 17*).



This model seems to follow the Nollywood approach which remains the first notably successful production and distribution model in Africa (Okome, 2007). According to Haynes (2011), Nollywood thrives without (or because of the lack of) government support. However, the Nollywood model seems to depend heavily on DVD sales, and the fact that the country has the largest population in Africa contributes to its success. For this self-funded model to potentially work in Namibia, one might have to consider the country's population of 2,3 million predominantly located in rural areas that might only be able to sustain a very small number of such filmmakers. Therefore, it would be arguably difficult to fully implement the Nollywood model of distribution in Namibia, not only due to the country's small population but also due to the lack of cinema culture. Nevertheless, the Nollywood model of producing a volume of films very cheaply for export and distribution could work in Namibia as long as the films have a broader appeal and are distributed beyond Namibian borders.

**Recommend optimal funding policies and procedures for Namibia.**

The next chapter makes specific recommendations that can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the government in the sustainable development of the local film industry.

Other legislative support such as co-production treaties with other countries could also assist in addressing the issue of distribution. For instance, the Hollywood model could, in theory, work in Namibia because as long as commercially viable films are produced and properly marketed internationally, it does not matter how small the domestic market is. An enabling environment including aspects such as a favourable policy framework, skilled labour, distribution channels as well as private investment is a pre-requisite for this model.

## **CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study evaluated the sustainability and development of the Namibia film industry with the purpose of examining the effectiveness of government involvement in the Namibian film industry using the two film projects, *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* and *The Ties that Bind* as case studies. The findings can help prevent pitfalls for future funding endeavours of the same nature. For that purpose, the study also assessed the viability of different funding models for the film industry and their suitability to the Namibian environment, and recommended optimal funding methods for the industry.

With regards to establishing the funding needs of the Namibian film industry, this study discovered that government funding can be of great assistance in the establishment of a strong national film industry, however stakeholders' opinions were divided on whether the generous funding provided in the past by government achieved the success it was expected to achieve. The lack of clear disbursing criteria of state funds and poor coordination between government and film producers was highlighted as one of the major challenges.

With regards to the nature and effectiveness of government's involvement in the production of the two film projects, *Namibia: the Struggle for Liberation* and the TV soap opera *The Ties that Bind*, most respondents believed that specific lessons were learned. For example, the jeopardy of political interference in creative processes, the

importance of planning before principal filming as well as the importance of marketing and distribution of films.

With regards to the production of the two projects, there was confusion of roles between the producers and the government especially when it came to creativity and disbursement of funds. In both productions, producers seemed to have focused more on making the film and neglected the marketing and distribution of the films.

Namibia can certainly learn from other countries such as South Africa who seem to be more transparent in the approach of funding and regulating films. For instance the NFC could learn from the NFVF on quality assurance, employment criteria as well as monitoring and evaluation of its activities, which would in turn improve productions the government hopes to support through the NFC.

It is evident that *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* has contributed to the development of the local film industry by exposing both the industry and the government to international practices of filmmaking. A lot of the problems during the production might have stemmed from the fact that local producers might have been overwhelmed with such a big budget production.

One could further argue that whatever they learned from working on such a big budget project, they could not apply as there was no other big budget film since. Some interviewees saw bad publicity as the reason for the government's reluctance to fund another big budget production. However, the project being the motion picture version of the first Namibian president's autobiography might have been an exceptional case all

together, and it probably did not improve the chances for another investment of such kind as the movie was not seen as a 'clear' success.

Even though a number of film projects (mostly short films) were (partly or fully) funded, through the Namibia Film Commission since 2010, *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* and *The Ties That Bind* remain the biggest state investments with the estimated total budget of more than N\$90 million.

Whether efforts and resources spent on attracting foreign productions to film in African countries has the assumed positive impact on the development of the local film industries remains unproven. This should at least be considered by the Namibia Film Commission that puts emphasis on promoting Namibia as a filming location instead of focusing on developing a home-grown film industry. Furthermore, Cuff (2009) remarked that the reliance on big budget international film productions alone cannot create a sustainable film industry.

There also appeared to be some opposing views about what role film or the creative industry in general plays or should play in Namibia. Some stakeholders see film related to art and culture that requires state funding to develop (and profit is not necessarily expected), while others see it related to economy and entertainment, requiring private investment to sustain itself. They are not mutually exclusive but stakeholders might have to be clearer in managing expectations accordingly.

In Africa, the justification for national cinema among scholars has been mostly about reversing the legacy of colonialism, while some European countries such as Germany and France have, for decades, been funding local films to protect their national cultures from the domination of foreign commercial products of Hollywood. Similarly, in South Africa, the government has been funding films since the establishment of the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF), as well as formulating policies aimed at developing the national film industry.

Critics such as Morawetz (2007) and Pager (2011) point out that with regards to some European countries, the spending of huge amounts of tax payers' money on films without recouping it is unsustainable. They argue that filmmakers tend to depend on state funds and locally produced films often fail to reach a wider audience, which further makes Hollywood stronger as audiences prefer Hollywood films.

Generally, approaches like government funded film industries and purely privately controlled or commercially driven industries exist side by side and have proven to work in a certain contexts. The Hollywood model could, in theory, work in Namibia because as long as commercially viable films are produced and properly marketed internationally, it does not matter how small the domestic market is.

An enabling environment such as favourable policies incentives; private investments and skilled workforces at every level of production are some of the pre-requisites for this model.

In an effort to determine whether the Nollywood's self-funded model could potentially work in Namibia, one might have to consider the country's population of 2,3 million that might not be able to sustain the local film industry. However, Bomba (2010) argued that even though Namibia has a small local audience, the country can use its advanced technological infrastructure to reach global audiences for Namibian films.

However, Thiec (2009) argued that as much as technology brought possibilities for developing countries, a number of prerequisite such as suitable regulatory frameworks, availability of qualified professionals, and distribution channels still appear necessary.

The Latin American model of Telenovela comes from a context with possibly similar economic and social circumstances and might be easier to apply to countries such as Namibia. Namibia with its small domestic market could consider producing telenovelas for exportation to other African countries and beyond.

In the end Namibian filmmakers will probably have to mix and match methods and models to fund, produce and distribute their content.

The study came to the following conclusions:

While questioning the manner in which public money was used to fund the two projects, *Namibia: The struggle For Liberation* and *The Ties That Bind* compared to the outcome, it is clear that without government funds the two projects would not have been realised. The processes of producing the two film projects also exposed both the government and

local producers to a more realistic idea of funds required to produce a film and to the complexity of filmmaking in general.

Lessons were learned such as the need to develop capacity at all levels of the film production process to ensure that available resources are properly managed.

While it might not be sustainable for the industry to depend solely on government funding, alternative funding sources such as private investment still need to be explored.

Whether for a state funded or commercial model, there is a need for skilled personnel, infrastructure, and distribution channels as well as favourable policies for producers (and investors). Distribution is a very important component in the development of the film industry, therefore the role of the national broadcaster (NBC) as a public service broadcaster needs to be realized and the government's demand for local content should come with financial commitment.

The general lack of access to information about the two productions translates into a lack of transparency of the funding mechanisms used, hindering efforts in assessing and improving from past approaches.

There is therefore a need for the Namibia Film Commission to develop a policy on monitoring and evaluation to determine challenges and successes of government funded projects. Such monitoring and evaluation can be in the form of an annual report or economic baseline on the progress of the film industry, and the information can be used for the strategic planning of the industry.



The study made the following recommendations:

1. There is a need for more coordinated effort to diversify the sources of funding for films to avoid dependence on one source, such as the government.
2. The government should strengthen its role by focusing on creating a favourable policy framework that encourages the private sector to invest in the local film industry.
3. The Namibia Film Commission should help facilitate access to alternative funds through co-production treaties as well as through supporting the incentives that attract international and local private investments into the production and distribution of local films.
4. The NFC needs to shift its focus towards the development of the local film industry instead of overemphasizing the attraction of foreign productions to make use of Namibia as a filming location.
5. There should be clear disbursement criteria and mechanism for accountability that are workable for both filmmakers and government when it comes to the handling of government funds.
6. Furthermore, the Namibian government can play a role in ensuring that the national broadcaster NBC is adequately funded to afford the production and acquisition of local content.

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**APPENDIX**

**Sample questionnaires**

*Disclaimer:* My name is Joel K. Haikali, a Master’s student of Media Studies at the University of Namibia. I am conducting an evaluation study on government funding of the two productions: *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* and *The Ties That Bind*.

To make sure that I will not forget what you tell me, I will be using an audio device to record our conversation.

Your identity will be kept confidential and a made-up name will be used in the study.

**RESPONDENT’S NAME**.....

**POSITION IN FILM**.....

**SECTOR**.....

**COUNTRY**.....

**CONTACT DETAILS**.....

### **Guiding questions for filmmakers**

1. How were you involved in the production of *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* or in *The Ties That Bind*?
2. On a scale from 1 to 10, (a) how would you assess *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* and/or *The Ties That Bind*? 1 being a failure and 10 being a success
3. Name factors that in your opinion contributed to the failure/success of *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* and/or *The Ties That Bind*?
4. What role did politics/politicians play in the success /failure of *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation*?
5. How was *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation / The Ties That Bind* distributed?
  - a. What could have been done better with regards to distribution?
6. *The Ties That Bind* was commissioned by the NFC for a specific number of episodes that were to be shown on NBC. The money was dispersed but the required number of episodes was never completed. Do you have any additional information? What could have been done better?
7. How did the film/ TV soap contribute towards the development of the film industry?
8. What additional lessons can be learned from *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* or *The Ties That Bind* in relation to State funding & involvement in the film industry?
9. How did media reports and the government's investigation of the mismanagement of funds affect relationships (between the government and the

film industry, between the public and the industry and between the public and government)?

10. What other alternative funding models would you suggest for Namibian films?
11. How can a country with a small population like Namibia produce commercial films and still recoup the money?

**Extra questions for the Namibia Film Commission:**

1. How was the film *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* distributed? How much money was made?
2. Who owns the rights to the film?
3. How many local films were produced since 2008?
4. What is the current status of the Namibian Film Incentive Program?
12. Act 11 of 2001 has made provision for a Film and Video fund, has that fund been implemented, if yes, why does it appear that the guidelines have not been or are not being followed
13. What is NFC's plan for the next 5 years regarding the development of the Namibian film industry?
14. Is there anything else you would like to add?