

Film Production in Lesotho: A Critique

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Abstract - Lesotho has a dynamic developing film industry. Before 2010, Basotho aspiring to break into film production would enroll for film studies with South African institutions of higher learning and end up working for South African film production companies. With the introduction of a second university in the land which introduced film related studies and with a heavy component on practical film production mixed with entrepreneurial skills, Basotho have taken film production on Lesotho and in Lesotho with a high level of seriousness. Organizations such as Sesotho Media, among others, have also weighed in to encourage film production in the country. This study sought to critically analyse film production development in Lesotho in order to give a scholarly perspective into the benefits of developing a film industry for Lesotho for the purposes of marketing Lesotho's rich traditions and unique culture as well as to help create employment for the citizens of Lesotho through a vibrant film industry. The study used qualitative methods of information gathering and analysis.

Keywords: film production, entrepreneurial skills, unique culture, industrialized entertainment.

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In comparison to European countries and the United States of America, Lesotho has minimal exposure to film production. Where Europe already celebrated its first centenary of film exhibition in 1895, the first sighting of film products to Basotho audiences was only in the late 1940s, though this was only in the very privileged areas like missionary institutions.

However the Basotho audiences seem to have responded well to the film medium. By the mid-1970s, Cinema attendance became very popular, especially in Maseru where there were at least well established Bioscope halls such as the RCC hall in Upper Thamae and Frasers Memorial Hall. This era marks an important milestone in Lesotho's film industry and consumption. These film exhibition centres had loyal audiences and standardised screening schedules as against chance screenings at high schools and tertiary institutions at the time.

In the mid-seventies television also made its entry in Lesotho. The Basotho, though initially in small numbers, started consuming film products through the television screen. In 1986, the first fully fitted cinema was opened in Lesotho. It was called the Kingsway Cinema and this initiative became very popular. The cinema boasted screening schedule that ran at times beyond midnight.

On the other hand, Lesotho boasts an array of renowned literature authors who have published numerous works of literature. Some of these works have been adapted for television drama in South Africa, for example "*Tholoanatsa Sethepu*" by B.M Khaketla and "*Mopheme*" by S. Matlosa. There is therefore neither shortage of appreciation nor talent in Lesotho for the country not to have a thriving film production industry.

In recent times, a good number of talented film practitioners from Lesotho have made their mark in South Africa. These include among others; Patronella Sello (*A woman's worth on ETV* 2012), Sechaba Morojele ("*Kelebone*" SABC 2,"*Olampintji*" & "*After 9*" SABC1, 2015), Tumelo Matobako ("*Monna oa Motsamai*", SABC 2009), P.J Makosholo ("*Ealla*", Mzansi Magic 2016) and Kalosi Ramakhula ("*Bitso lebe ke seromo*", SABC 2 1995), all film practitioners whose works have appeared on South African Television stations.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Though Basotho are generally interested in films and there seem to be a mature film appreciation level, the filmmaking industry in Lesotho however is still in its infancy. Basotho have not produced many professional films of their own except for short films. Film production in Lesotho seems not to have any commercial benefit for the few that produce films in Lesotho. There does not seem to have been any effort in a long time for these producers to have come together to set up, at least, a networking body that they could use to standardise the industry or even to improve themselves and for a long time has been a lone ranger's territory.

III. AIMS

This study is born out of a need to uncover the underlying challenges that have led to the poor status of film production in Lesotho as understanding them will be the first step to overcoming them. It seeks to resolve any assumed problem where film production can be turned into a professional industry. This study seeks to inform the policy maker, the developer and the business ventures to work toward empowering filmmakers in order to mitigate against high unemployment that currently prevail. This industry has the ability to contribute towards the country's economy immensely therefore this study can be the first step in developing best practices in that respect.

IV. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The concept framing this study is that of how motion pictures/films industrialized entertainment. This idea will help come up with the critique of how film as entertainment can be properly harnessed and contribute to employment creation and therefore poverty alleviation in economically developing Lesotho. As Bakker (2012) writes with the Charlie Chaplin illustration, packaging talent can transform talent from mere performing talent into lucrative income generating venture; from theatrical live performance viewed in halls by few paying audiences to being viewed on screens globally. The transformation of Charlie Chaplin from a mere live theatrical performer to a performing star of the motion picture had profitable returns higher than that of a mere live theatrical performer before a small audience in a hall. It therefore is worthy aligning the budding Lesotho film industry to the film as industry concept in order to harness the acting and film production talent from Lesotho into a lucrative industry that can launch the abundant talent into economic prosperity at national level.

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

The existing literature in Lesotho filmmaking is very limited. Scholars have grappled with the film "*Unforgotten Kingdom*"; an award winning American-financed film made by an American writer-director but has almost ignored the country's home-grown feature films or documentaries.

Other articles give some insight about the film industries in other African countries. Krista Tuomi takes on South Africa in her article that "in South Africa, the film industry is relatively developed and profitable, generating 5.5 billion Rand annually" (Tuomi, 2007:69). Tuomi further posits that "in South Africa, the consolidation seems to be stunted by the industrial structure of the country and there are large media conglomerates forming in South Africa, where the majority of production companies are still small. There are

not many houses that can afford to own their own resources while also taking on distribution responsibility" (Tuomi, 2007:79).

Moreover, Martin Mhando and Laurian Kipeja write about the Tanzanian market in their article, identifying a list of challenges facing filmmakers in Tanzania, including "lack of production facilities, poor market organization, inadequate rules and regulation, limited understanding of global markets, the problem of language and lack of bargaining power and commercial relationships" (Mhando and Kipeja, 2010:7). Hence, the majority of local film-makers and producers are isolated and left to operate in marginal economic areas such as micro and informal enterprises. Their problems are magnified by the lack of access to networks that can help them compete in the global film business.

Lesotho can learn from the example of Namibia whose vision is to create jobs, provide infrastructure and develop human resources by 2030 (Haikali, 2016: i). Haikali (2016: i) cites Cuff (2013) saying that 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 create employment. Haikali (2016: i) also quotes Bomba (2010) saying that cultural industries and film in particular can also play a role in education, raising consciousness and cultural reaffirmation, furthering national healing, reconciliation and nation building- especially at grass roots level.

Enahora (1989: 101) writes that film is a means of socialization, that is; the process and experience that help the individual to become sensitive to the expectation of other members of the society, their values and culture. Enahora (1989: 101) goes on to say that cinema is an important tool in building cultural institutions, and reinforcing cultural pride and that cinema could be used to heal the psychological wounds created by slavery and colonialism and to provide moral upliftment.

The National Film and Video Foundation (2017, 4) writes that the results from the economic impact modelling reveal that the film industry has a positive economic impact on the South African economy. During the 2016/17 financial year, the film industry in South Africa had a direct impact of R4.4 billion on economic production (The National Film and Video Foundation, 2017:4). In total, the operations of the film industry in South Africa raised the level of production by approximately R12.2 billion (The National Film and Video Foundation, 2017:4). The National Film and Video Foundation (2017: 4) goes on to establish that the total investment or expenditure that occurred in the South African film industry in the 2016/17 financial year resulted in the following economic benefits:

- A direct impact of R4.4 billion on economic production, leading to a rise in total production in economy to approximately R12.2 billion.
- The net operational expenditure produced in the four financial years analysed in the study amounted to R17.5 billion.
- During the 2016/17 financial year, the net operational expenditure of the film and video industry was R4.4 billion.
- The employment multiplier increased by a multiple of 4.9 for every R1 invested. Therefore, the South African film industry created an increase in employment, which essentially meant that an additional two people benefitted from the new income derived from the direct, indirect and induced jobs created in the 2016/17 financial year.

Writing on funding of film in post apartheid South Africa, Fredericks (2004:2) writes that in terms of arts and culture government has a responsibility to level the playing fields in order to ensure that the previously disadvantaged organisations and marginalised cultures would have an equal opportunity - funding norms were changed. State institutions were re-organised and funding to independent private institutions withdrawn, as they did not fit the vision for a multicultural society (Fredericks, 2004:2). Fredericks (2004:2) goes on to say that the vision is for cultural diversity within a unifying national culture and the funding models had to reflect and endorse this vision. Audience development and marketing became and still is a mammoth task particularly when catering for eleven official languages, of which 10 are African, and a mixture of ethnic minorities ranging from Asian to European (Fredericks, 2004:2).

Fredericks (2004:2) also says that in order to achieve the objectives above the funding structure of the arts had to change, internally as well as internationally, as is reflected in the following quote:

“Canada has provided official development assistance (ODA) to South Africa since 1979. Prior to South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, ODA was channeled through both Canadian and South African non-governmental organizations (NGO), and multilateral agencies. Since 1994, the direction of Canada's ODA programme has refocused along government-to-government lines in direct support of South Africa's official growth and development strategies.”

VI. METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a qualitative research design which analyzed the opinions of filmmakers from various stages of their engagement with the film industry. The opinions were drawn from their experience, trying to establish and determine whether the practice is professional or not.

Therefore, qualitative research was appropriate, the reason being that not only the small group being filmmakers was studied, but also inculcated the wider and broader range of film industry stakeholders in Lesotho. Qualitative research contributes rich and insightful results because it is descriptive. This design allows information gathered to produce meaning from the participants' contributions. It also allows the researcher to get a better understanding through first-hand experience, truthful reporting and quotations of actual conversations, which makes it better for the researcher to analyze data and provide positive feedback.

The type of qualitative research used for this study is phenomenological. Phenomenology describes the "subjective reality" of an event, as perceived by the study population; it is the study of a phenomenon. According to Moustakas(1994:151)“phenomenography is a fairly new qualitative research method developed in the mid to late 1970s whose focus is on the experience of a phenomenon rather than on the phenomenon per se“. The aim is to investigate the differing ways in which people experience, perceive, apprehend, understand and conceptualize various phenomena. A phenomenographic analysis seeks a “description, analysis, and understanding of experiences” (May, 1991:187). The focus is on variation in both the perceptions of the phenomenon as experienced by the filmmaker and in the “ways of seeing something”, as experienced and described by the researcher. The various perceptions which emerge from the data are collected and sorted into ‘categories of description’, (Merriam 2009:13)”.

This study used a face to face method of gathering information. The purpose of the research interview was to explore the views, experiences, beliefs and motivations of individuals on specific matters. According to Silverman (2000:92) “qualitative methods, such as interviews, are believed to provide a 'deeper' understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative methods, such as questionnaires”.

The open ended types of questions were used in face to face interviews. Face to face interviews helped in acquiring factual information since the researcher was able to sit with the interviewees and got information thus being able to evaluate the respondents' honesty, attitudes and preferences on the stated topic.

VII. FINDINGS

Feedback from Lesotho film producers

A film producer from Lesotho who also happens to be a film lecturer at Limkokwing University of Creative Technology (LUCT) responded that: For starters the culture of telling stories through the lense of a camera in Lesotho is lacking,

due to several challenges that we encounter as filmmakers, one of them being funding and the platform to show your films. Even if one may source funding from abroad to make a film in Lesotho, the challenge will be to get your audience to watch since there is no platform for filmmakers to express themselves. Another challenge is film equipment; we don't have equipment houses where production companies would rent equipment. A big challenge if you don't own your equipment. If there is such, I have never heard of it as a filmmaker, I assume it is because in this country's Film industry has not been given the recognition it deserves.

Feedback from film makers

The film makers from MPALE in response had this to say: The cost of producing a short film in Lesotho varies, one would therefore ask, how short is your film; 2minutes, or 20 minutes, because then your budget will be measured by the length of your project. A two minute film will have less cast and less movement, whereas, a 20 minute will demand more, even more locations depending on the story.

Another film maker and lecturer from LUCT responded to the challenge of lack of equipment thus: By getting equipment for filmmakers to tell their stories, the rest will fall into place. Locations for film shooting is also another challenge and this can be eased by making sure those locations are accessible because some of these locations are just not accessible when one shoots a film.

In response to the question if there is a union for film makers in Lesotho, one independent film maker in Lesotho responded that she had never heard of one, and if there is, she is convinced it is not living up to its standards.

Another independent film maker who recently graduated from LUCT said he was not sure if there are any incentives, apart from awards of recognition for one's work at film festivals.

Feedback on piracy

In response to the question on challenges of piracy with film production in Lesotho, another independent film producer in Lesotho said that since the industry is too small, piracy is not that aggressive as compared to other countries where movies are produced in large volumes. She said in Lesotho, piracy for works of art is more rampant in the music industry than in the film industry. Another independent film producer responded that where it exists, the government must step in to make sure that piracy is contained. Another film producer was of the opinion on piracy saying that there is nothing wrong with that so long as it benefits local filmmakers.

Feedback on dominance of film production by foreigners

One other film maker and lecturer at LUCT who worked on the production of "The Forgotten Kingdom" mourned that foreign filmmakers coming to Lesotho will always benefit themselves but leaving nothing to local filmmakers in Lesotho, simply because there is no organised institution that champions this course. Although foreign filmmakers are coming at a snail's pace, it will not be long till the Hollywood machine starts exploring Lesotho in a radical way and telling their stories. Unless an organised institution is formed that will oversee this process, local filmmakers will never develop.

Feedback on lack of government involvement in film production

A Mosotho film maker who once practiced his trade in South Africa but now back in Lesotho said that Lesotho needs the cooperation of all stakeholders in the film industry; filmmakers, the private sector and the government in film production endeavors. The film maker went on to say he had to establish himself in South Africa and make films and television series to further his career but now is back in Lesotho only to discover that the development of film and television is stagnant because there is not even a single institution that funds these programmes or rather encourage local filmmakers to tell their stories. He also said that being a filmmaker, he finds it very frustrating, and now has to look for other means of survival to make sure that he puts bread on the table. As a further testimony of his frustration with the status quo, he said he is currently teaching film in an Institution of higher learning just to get balance and see if there could be any changes in the country as far as film is concerned. He continued to say that as Basotho film producers, they cannot just sit and watch foreign filmmakers coming to Lesotho with the support of their governments to tell stories whilst they do not have any backing whatsoever from their own government. He also said that things must change and the world must listen to Basotho stories told by Basotho and that it is only possible if the government encourages this.

Feedback on lack of funding for film production in Lesotho

An independent award winning film producer and lecturer in Lesotho opened up on the status of the industry in Lesotho saying that, in his own opinion and experience there are a number of critical challenges that face filmmakers generally in Lesotho. He said the challenges include, (i) Lack of recognition, appreciation, from firstly the government of Lesotho for the film industry's significance, capacity and or potential. The fact that to date there are no policies,

legislation, bodies formed by or through the initiative of government specifically for film and generally motion pictures is a sure evidence that government does not value the craft. Secondly there is no support, motivation, for the aspiring filmmakers from government and the private sector alike. (ii) Lack of support for aspiring filmmakers from the stakeholders – individuals, the government and private sector. While these harsh, unbearable and undesirable conditions exist, they do not hold back fanatics from immersing, persistent in making films. There are no initiatives from the above-mentioned bodies for support and motivation.

Government has done very well in sponsoring the film courses offered in the Limkokwing University of Creative Technology Lesotho but the downside is that there is no proper regulated industry to absorb graduates from this institution into the industry proper. There are no film seminars, funding, and government film festivals, to mention but a few things, which could motivate and grow local talent. (iii) Lack of unity from practitioners. There has not been unity from filmmakers for the longest time in Lesotho, which has been a problem. The formation of the motion pictures association of Lesotho (MPALE) approximately three years ago, promised to be a body that would unite filmmakers - practitioners to speak with one voice. The association to date, in the young film maker's opinion, has failed dismally.

He also went on to say that there is a problem with lack of clear communication and the poor administration of the association.

The same film maker went on to testify that there is no funding available for filmmakers in Lesotho from any of the mentioned bodies. He said however he has witnessed that there could be possible minimal funding from the private sector raised mainly through proposals and pitching of ideas. He went on to say that the government should start putting in place clear legislative structures to regulate the industry such as endorsing the long-awaited media policy. He said the government should also work with the established association to put in place an establishment to cater for filmmakers' needs that would be communicated by and through the association. He also suggested that the government should set aside annual funding for filmmakers, run local film festivals and awards for film practitioners as an incentive for the industry.

The film maker went on to say the only current local film festival running is the Lesotho Film Festival currently fully run by an NGO, Sesotho Media. He went on to observe that the film festival has since its establishment grown but with a lot of challenges in its way. He said that the festival lacks diversity, it currently only recognizes film producers and

neglect to appreciate other disciplines involved in the production of the films. He said the festival's award ceremony is not a consistent incentive.

Depending on the funding they get, in some years they are able to give filmmakers valuable items for their craft. He also said that the good thing is that since the establishment of this film festival, the filmmaker has remained motivated and competitive, young and old. The film maker however bemoaned the absence of regulatory structures as this leads to an unacceptable exploitation of the country's resources in all spheres. He observed that a lot of foreign filmmakers have come and gone making motion pictures in the country offering and leaving next to nothing in terms of revenue for Lesotho and the industry in the country.

Feedback from government ministries

In response to the position of their respective ministries and departments in relation to provision of funding for film production in Lesotho, the personnel from the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Communication, Science and Technology could not come up with clear answers. This was evidence enough to show that these government ministries did not have a clear cut policy on rendering assistance to film production in the country.

VIII. ANALYSIS

Film production is an expensive enterprise in any economy and at the same time has the potential to create employment in Lesotho. The Olsberg Report (2012) writes that the challenge of creating sustainability in the independent film sector is an issue for every country (Olsberg Report, 2012). The report goes on to say that governments around the world have come to understand the full range of benefits of a thriving film sector because both government and industry have realized the benefits of the industry which happen to be cultural, social and economical (Olsber Report, 2012).

The observation by the Olsberg Report above can serve as a point of reference from which the government of Lesotho can use as a point of departure in mobilizing resources for the film industry's development in Lesotho. The young and fledgling film industry will not go anywhere without the support and intervention of government, the private sector as well as the Non Governmental Organizations who happen to have the resources.

The government has got the capacity to unlock resources for this industry because it is easier for government to approach international funders for the release of funds as compared to individuals, especially in Lesotho, where most film producers are young and recent graduates from university

meaning they do not have the capacity to be funding their own productions.

Film has also got the potential of marketing and preserving a people's culture so the government of Lesotho can partner up with UNESCO in the film industry to produce works that tell the story of Lesotho by Basotho to market to the world. Individual film producers will definitely have challenges approaching and convincing UNESCO to release funding as compared to when this is a government initiative. Writing about film and the preservation of culture in Nigeria, Ahmadu and Joshua (2016:2) say that the Nigerian culture has been invaded by the foreign cultures through the use of communications systems like films.

History has shown that the intrusion of Western culture into the third world nations [like Nigeria] through the use of communications facilities has always been rampant (Ahmadu and Joshua, 2016:2). This is because the Nigerian people have been exposed to a high range of programmes and communications content which have in turn moulded their thought pattern, belief, system and actions (Ahmadu and Joshua, 2016:2). Local film production can be used to speak back to the west and liberate polities like Nigeria from cultural imperialism. Lesotho can tap into the same mindset and invest in cultural preservation and liberate the hapless population from cultural imperialism through telling the Lesotho story by Basotho through the locally produced film medium.

Local film makers bemoan the fact that foreign film makers come to exploit the local resources in the form of manpower and terrain but leaving no revenue for Lesotho. It is true and will be a problem forever if the local players are not proactive in initiating productions and are always waiting for foreigners to come to them. The British Film Institute (BFI) (2004:1) observes of local film production that the venues foster a sense of place and provide a focus for the local community, whilst enhancing local cultural life through the provision of mainstream and/or specialized film. The cinemas play an important social inclusion role, reaching out to otherwise underserved elements of the local population (BFI, 2004:1). They enhance learning opportunities through links with local schools and colleges, improving the skills and knowledge base of the community (BFI, 2004:1).

Serge (2004: 6) writes that for much of the motion picture history, Los Angeles has been the global centre for feature film production with Hollywood's vertically integrated studios providing one-stop facilities catering for any scale of production. Serge (2004: 6) continues to say that today, the studio set-up paints a very different picture as the industry reacts to the fast evolving digital landscape of film

production and newly forming business strategies. Part of this evolving picture is the outsourcing of Hollywood films to overseas production companies and the subsequent formation of permanent studios bases around the world (Sergi 2004: 6).

With the dazzling rugged naturally beautiful terrain of Lesotho, local film makers can tap into this opportunity offered by Hollywood and entice these studios to establish bases in Lesotho in collaboration with the Lesotho film production houses. This will go a long way in benefiting Lesotho film production. Lesotho can build on the foundation of agreements like the one that brought Hollywood to Lesotho for the filming of the movie American Ninja 4 in 1990. That way Lesotho can capitalise on the prominence of its naturally beautiful terrain and establish the nation's film industry and integrate it with the established international film industry such as Hollywood.

The local film makers should also engage the government to establish a media policy that protects the rights of local film industry stakeholders. It is up to the film industry to take the necessary action that will convince the authorities to establish such policy because the government will be comfortable without one like the current prevailing situation. For instance, the Kenyan government's media policy, among other things, stipulates that Broadcasters and Cinemas will be expected to comply with film classification and quotas laid down for locally produced films and may be required to screen specified short films (National Communications Secretariat, nd:7). Such policy will protect and promote the interests of the local film industry in Lesotho from competition from well established economies.

Sesotho Media is the only organization making a visible effort to incentivise film production in Lesotho and other players should have an appreciation of this effort and come on board with more resources to assist. There are long time benefits in all stakeholders playing a role in film production. California Film Commission (CFC) (2012: 3) writes that film production is a clean, non-polluting industry, and produces a quick injection of revenue to a local community. When a feature film production goes on a location requiring overnight stays, the cast and crew may remain for two to six weeks, or even longer (CFC, 2012:3). Generally, these productions are likely to spend in excess of \$50,000 per day when shooting outside "the movie zone" (the Los Angeles region) (CFC, 2012:3).

The impact of location filming on local businesses can be considerable (CFC, 2012:3). Today the average cost to create a feature film by a major studio is more than \$64 million (CFC, 2012:3). These dollars are pumped into communities

when filming occurs on location. For example, Sony Pictures Entertainment spent several weeks in San Mateo County, El Dorado County, and the Sacramento area filming scenes for *Memoirs of a Geisha* (CFC, 2012:3). The production company spent over \$4 million dollars in those three counties alone (CFC, 2012:3).

Clearly, when filming comes to town, there can be huge benefits to local businesses and residents (CFC, 2012:3). Often a production company will bring only key crewmembers and hire locally, depending on the availability of qualified technicians (CFC, 2012:3). Car rental companies can anticipate the need for ten or more vehicles during the entire length of filming (CFC, 2012:3). Local dry cleaners and laundries will be required for both the personal requirements of cast and crew and the needs of the wardrobe department (CFC, 2012:3). Production companies will often call upon local financial institutions to deposit operating moneys and act as payroll companies (CFC, 2012:3). Gas stations, lumberyards, equipment rentals, communications providers, hardware stores and countless other businesses can expect a boost in business during film productions (CFC, 2012:3).

Lesotho film makers can also learn from the example of Nigeria and Zimbabwe in exploring low cost video film production. About film production in Zimbabwe, Mukwara (2015, 69) cites Solans and Getino (1976) saying “lack of equipment, technical difficulties, the compulsory specialization of each phase of work, and high costs” characterize the industry. Mukwara (2015, 69) continues to say that there were no viable distribution and exhibition platforms by which to reach most ordinary Zimbabweans. However, Zimbabwe explored how to circumvent these obstacles to the industry and decided to explore video film production which is cost effective and less demanding on distribution and consumers of film can purchase DVDs to view at home cheaply. Film makers can generate revenue for their projects with minimal costs of production.

Zajc (2009, 71) says, of the rise of Nollywood, that Kenneth Nneube, the electronics shop owner from Lagos was trying to sell a large stock of blank video cassettes he had bought from Taiwan, when he got the idea that the cassettes would sell better with something recorded on them. For this reason he shot *Living in Bondage*, a movie that sold 750 000 copies (Zajc, 2009:71). Zajc (2009,71) provides another example from which Lesotho film makers can learn; that is, by citing the example of actress Franca Aernan who wrote a book *I am an Actor; Career Making in Acting* (2005) in which she advises the actors to take care of their future by investing into the video film production themselves. This proves that within Nigerian video film industry, the involvement with the work and with the results of the work is very intense and

that is the main reason for its success (Zajc, 2009:74). Lesotho film makers can therefore learn to be proactive in propping up their industry and rely on themselves by ploughing back profits into their industry rather than wait for well wishers to throw something in their direction in order for them to produce.

There are benefits from investing in the film industry that, if government is properly advised, can tap in, harness and generate revenue that can positively impact the national fiscal. Monson, Wilson and Goodliffe (2017:4) write that spending during the Sundance Film Festival generates many positive economic benefits. They continue to say that tourism-related industries are beneficiaries of spending that would not otherwise be part of the state’s economy, and that spending entering the state induces additional spending as companies hire additional labor, increase their capacity, and purchase the goods that are necessary to accommodate the additional visitors (Monson et al, 2017:4). Revenue is generated through attendees’ spending on a variety of services: lodging, meals, transportation, recreation, and other retail expenses (Monson et al, 2017:4). The government of Lesotho can make profitable business through roping in all responsible ministries for tourism, communications and finance to look at film production and hosting film festivals as lucrative business.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

The government of Lesotho should assist, through the Ministry responsible for culture, to establish a culture fund as well as a welfare organization, at national level, to cater for the needs of the film industry. Such intervention will lead to the establishment of even structures like unions for film makers for the welfare of the film industry employees and that will provide a guarantee for the survival of the industry and growth sustainably for a long time.

Film stakeholders in Lesotho themselves like producers, directors and even actors should also organise a union of their own so that they can approach authorities with one voice, in an organized manner. They can even pool resources together and purchase equipment for hiring out to members and non members of the union and the film production fraternity at large.

It is also beneficial for local film producers to take the initiative, come up with projects in which they will rope in foreign film makers rather than wait for foreign film makers to come in to the country and rope them in as junior partners. If the local film makers are not pro active, then they will perennially be relegated to play minor roles and the foreign producers will not stop patronising the local producers.

This study also recommends that the local film stakeholders draft a policy that protects their industry and convince government to adopt such policy. This can go a long way in protecting the rights and potential gains for the stakeholders from this industry.

Other stakeholders should also support the efforts by Sesotho Media with the film awards hosting and sponsorship, especially the government of Lesotho. This study recommends that the government gets on board and help with the efforts of mobilizing resources for awards and festivals as an incentive for film producers.

X. CONCLUSION

Lesotho has got limited exposure to film products. However, Basotho audiences seem to have responded well to the film medium. Lesotho boasts an array of renowned literature authors who have published numerous works of literature. In recent times, a sizable number of talented film producers and practitioners from Lesotho have made their mark in South Africa.

Lesotho has got potential for film production in the sense of its rich and unique terrain as well as a rich and eventful history. However, despite early interest in film appreciation and considerable interest in the film production initiatives in Lesotho (productions from Hollywood such as American Ninja 4), there does not seem to be any efforts from the government to standardise and professionalise film production in the country. Until 2008, with the establishment of Limkokwing University of Creative Technology, there was no place to study film in Lesotho.

Recently there have been a few semi-professional and fairly professional productions in Lesotho. The most professional Production to date is Moshoeshoe The Mountain King (2014) a two volume documentary film based on the founding King of the Basotho nation. Only recently, an association calling itself Motion Picture Association of Lesotho (MPALE) (2015) has been formed. Lesotho has a very high unemployment rate and film production has the capacity to contribute towards the alleviation of job shortages in Lesotho. Though the Basotho are generally interested in films and there seem to be a mature film appreciation level, the filmmaking industry is in its infancy.

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