



**.KZN  
FILM**

# INVESTIGATING THE DRIVERS OF THE LOW PARTICIPATION AMONGST WOMEN AND FEMALE GRADUATES IN THE KZN FILM INDUSTRY



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## ***Abstract***

The study was conducted in KwaZulu-Natal with women in film, female film graduates, and KZN Film Commission employees as participants. The study aimed to investigate the underlying factors behind the underrepresentation of women and female graduates in the film industry post-tertiary and to identify challenges and barriers in this sector. The study was conducted via a survey using a quantitative research approach and an online structured questionnaire as the data collection instrument. Among the respondents, 34 were women in film, 36 were female film graduates, and 8 were KZN Film Commission employees. The study uncovered that there are fewer opportunities for women to participate in the film industry and that there is limited financial support for women-owned productions. The study also found that funders prefer males in the industry, further limiting women's participation. Furthermore, the findings revealed that barriers to entry are attributed to those with financial muscle and connections. Being underpaid and only getting freelance work was also cited as a measure cause for females to leave the industry. Additionally, women in the film industry face tremendous challenges ranging from lack of support, lack of opportunities, lack of funding and limited resources, lack of strong women narratives in the film roles, nepotism, lack of connections, and sexual harassment etc.

The study recommends fostering more female-targeted international internship programmes and the provision of mentorship programmes that pair experienced female professionals with aspiring women in the film industry. Furthermore, the study recommends the establishment of labour unions in the film industry to deal with issues of inclusivity, diversity, the safety of women, and equality, as well as the establishment of specialized training and skill development programs that cater specifically to women in the film industry.

**keywords:** KZN Film Commission, female film graduates, women in film, film director, actress, freelance work.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The film industry is one of the constituents of South Africa's creative sector. The National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) has underlined the crucial role that the sector plays in nation-building, encouraging social cohesion and reconciliation, and aiding economic development (NFVF, 2021). In addition to this, the industry contributes significantly to South Africa's economy through the generation of revenue, the creation of jobs, and the attraction of foreign exchange. The KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission (2015) noted that despite being a developing market, the South African film industry is currently competitive in worldwide film landscapes. In terms of economic development, according to the National Film and Video Foundation economic impact assessment study (2021), the total estimated impact of the film industry on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at market prices is estimated at R1,08 billion nationally. Provincially, The KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission (2020: 5) reported that, in 2019, the KwaZulu-Natal film industry contributed R340 million to the South African GDP, which is 9.26% of the national figure.

Moreover, the film industry supports other industries, such as the hospitality and transport industry, by stimulating hotels, catering, restaurants, and transportation businesses, thereby creating direct and indirect employment (NFVF, 2014). The estimated total employment impact was 31 444 full-time equivalent jobs in 2019/20, with an estimated 18 104 direct jobs and 3 302 indirect jobs (NFVF, 2021). From a sociocultural standpoint, the industry plays an essential role in preserving and disseminating the country's knowledge, history, and diversity, which contributes significantly to cultivating the country's appeal and developing foreign trade transactions (NFVF, 2017).

While the industry makes a meaningful contribution to the country's economy in terms of increasing the number of women it employs. The KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission (2020) reported the following challenges: a shortage of skilled production crew (including skilled producers and talented scriptwriters) and studio infrastructural facilities, a fragmented policy environment that does not support the industry cohesively, lack of consumer support for locally produced films; inadequate access to distribution and marketing instruments among other issues. The stagnant transformation of the industry has also been noted as a significant obstacle, especially in the more established provincial film industries, where the involvement and inclusion of women and Black individuals have been a significant impediment. Research conducted by the NFVF (2015) reported a general concern about black employees being placed in lower-level jobs within the industry. This research also showed that only a few Black



individuals have been able to break into senior roles that impact decision-making. This was much more the case for Black women, who are affected by overlapping barriers that exacerbate their race and gender disadvantage and result in additional difficulties in attaining high-level positions (NFVF, 2018). This not only leads to the underrepresentation of Black women in the industry but also poses a significant threat to the industry as most emerging filmmakers are essentially excluded from meaningful market participation.

## **2. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Evidence suggests that more males than females are employed in the film industry in South Africa (Visser, 2014). Furthermore, women are less likely to break into senior roles that impact decision-making compared to their male counterparts (NFVF, 2022). This is the case even though South African women filmmakers are vastly skilled, with the majority (52.15%) having gone through formal film school training and another 31% having acquired their skills through experience or being self-taught (NFVF, 2022). The under-representation of women in the film industry workforce is symptomatic of general employment trends, societal inequalities, and disparities observed globally and in South Africa. The most recent global female labour force participation rate is estimated to be approximately 47%, compared to 72% for males (International Labour Organisation, 2022). This trend is particularly evident in South Africa, which has higher unemployment rates for the general population compared to the rest of the world (World Bank, 2022). According to Statistics South Africa (2023), unemployment statistics for women remain higher than the national average, with 35,7% of South African women in the labour force currently without work and actively looking for work. The impact of unemployment is particularly severe for women as the unemployment rate for men shows a consistent decrease of 0.7 percentage points on a quarterly basis and 2.6 percentage points annually. Black African women face an even more challenging situation, with an unemployment rate of 39.8% in Q2:2023, which is higher than both the national average and other demographic groups (Statistics South Africa, 2023).

This trend is also visible in the film industry; anecdotal evidence from KZN film suggests that female students do not join the industry in numbers post-tertiary education. In all local tertiary institutions, female students are the largest in numbers (Urban-Econ Development Economists, 2020). However, very few of them take the profession of filmmaking after their tertiary qualification. This can be corroborated by the gendered trends discussed in the previous section and by the study conducted by NFVF (2013) that argued that lack of connections and

knowing the right people in the industry were among the obstacles that film students in higher education identified as barriers preventing them from breaking into the industry. This study further revealed that another obstacle was the fact that the film industry does not advertise positions but instead relies on word of mouth to attract employees, so in essence, if you do not know anyone or have any connections within the industry, chances of getting employed are limited. A recent report by NFVF (2022) revealed that this issue remains a concern, indicating that connections, referrals and networks are currently the most popular mode of finding work opportunities, outstripping project advertising. While this method is regarded as the most efficient and effective, there are concerns that it sets limits on transformation; for example, new entrants who are black, young women and people living with disabilities often find it difficult to enter the industry as they lack the support of viable networks (NFVF, 2022). Lack of experience and financial challenges were also identified as significant obstacles, with 55.6% of graduates experiencing them (NFVF, 2013). In addition to these obstacles, the chairperson of the Independent Directors Association Africa (IDAA), Andile Sinqoto, dissected some of the current challenges facing the industry, arguing that many South African film industry professionals, including the youth, are leaving for better opportunities abroad. Some are leaving the film industry and transitioning to other businesses due to challenges faced within the sector (Independent Online, 2023).

There has been increasing awareness and discussion of the limited representation of females in the film industry and literature. However, despite increasing awareness of this disparity, the industry has undergone a minimal transformation to address the inequalities in the film industry. Furthermore, no comprehensive studies are looking at the challenges faced by women in the film industry and the absorption trends of women in the film study within the KwaZulu-Natal context. Hence, the main objective of this study was to investigate the underlying factors behind the underrepresentation of women and female graduates in the film industry.

### **3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The study aimed to investigate the underlying factors behind the underrepresentation of women and female graduates in the film industry.

#### **3.1 Objectives**

The objectives of this study were to:

- Critically examine current scholarly literature on the participation of women in the film industry post-tertiary.
- Identify challenges and barriers faced by women and female graduates in the KZN film industry.
- Propose and recommend measures to improve the participation of women in the KZN film industry.

### 3.2 Research questions

- What is the status of women's participation in the film industry post-tertiary education?
- What are the challenges and barriers faced by female graduates and women in the KZN film industry?
- What are the proposed measures that can be taken to improve the participation of females in the film industry in KZN?

## 4. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 4.1 Introduction

Women participate in the film industry in all roles, including film directors, actresses, cinematographers, film producers, and other professionals. Over the past years, there has been a growing awareness and discussion on the limited representation of women in the film industry (National Film and Video Foundation {NFVF}, 2018). In support of the above, research shows that there is an underrepresentation of women as directors, producers, scriptwriters, and cinematographers (Jones, 2019; Sanchez, 2019; Yang et al., 2020). Loist and Prommer (2019) reported that, between 2009-2013, women solely directed 22% of the films, while no women were involved at all in 75% of the films. Liddy (2020) showed that only 3% of women across the globe directed theatrical screening films, contending that there has been a percentage decline of women in all creative roles, some tripping below 30% in countries such as Australia, Germany, Portugal, New Zealand, USA, and Poland. The University of Southern California reported that, in Oscar's 95-year history, only 17% of nominees were women, and less than 2% were Black women. Furthermore, only 9% of the directors from the 2022 top 100 earning films list were women and less than 3% were Black women (Brown et al., 2023).

The NFVF (2018) of the films produced between 2000 and 2007 in South Africa and found that only a small number of the fifty-five (55) feature films were directed, written, or produced by women, highlighting the marginalisation of women and their limited opportunities to tell their own stories. In this regard, the film industry is portrayed to be a male-dominated industry with a low representation of women. Recent statistics still reflect that women remain underrepresented in most key roles, except in the head wardrobe categories, head designer, editing, scriptwriting and producing department, where they are fairly represented (NFVF, 2018). The figure below depicts the role where women are fairly represented.

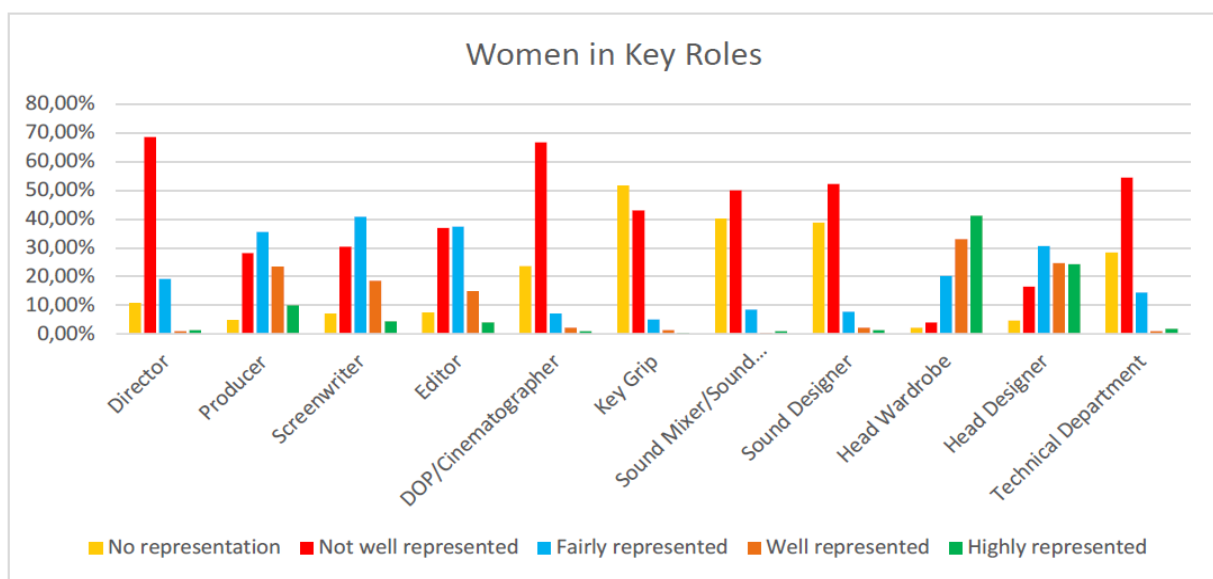


Figure 1: Key Roles Where Women Are Fairly Represented

Source: NFVF (2018).

From the figure above, it remains undeniable that women continue to face significant challenges in occupying key roles such as directing and producing. However, there are certain domains where they have managed to break through societal barriers with remarkable success. Specifically, within the head wardrobe categories, head designer, editing, scriptwriting, and producing departments. The South African film industry has a complex background due to the impact of apartheid, which not only marginalised black people but also limited the involvement of women in the industry. For over a century, the film industry has been dominated by men, with limited roles for women, partly because of apartheid's discriminatory policies and laws (NFVF, 2018). Internationally, the emergence of moving pictures in the 1890s, the enforcement of extant stereotypes of blacks and ideologies of racism were represented on the “big screen.” White people, through the incorporation of blackface, played on stage and in film

African Americans. Blackface Minstrelsy, which developed in the early 19th century, consisted of skits, acts, dancing, and musical performances that mocked black people. These shows portrayed black people as “dim-witted, lazy, buffoonish, irrational, and happy-go-lucky” (Terry, 2018: 3).

Engel (2018) states that the South African film industry has been dominated by male directors from its existence, and the physically demanding and long working hours of the industry also made it difficult for women to participate actively. In recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the underrepresentation of women in key positions in the film industry. However, no comprehensive study was done to address the issue and its causes.

Similar trends are also observed in the international space. According to the World Economic Forum (2022), only 25% of behind-the-scenes roles in big US movies are held by women, and just 17% of directors and writers are female. These figures demonstrate a clear gender disparity in the industry and highlight the need for concerted efforts to promote gender diversity and inclusion in filmmaking. According to the World Economic Forum (WEF) (2022), despite the #MeToo movement creating awareness about the gender power imbalances in Hollywood, the issue of underrepresentation of women in behind-the-scenes roles is not given enough attention. Below is a statistical representation of females in male-dominated roles behind the scenes.



Figure 2: Females in major behind-the-scenes roles in big US movies

Source: Lauzen (2022) as cited in ILO (2022).

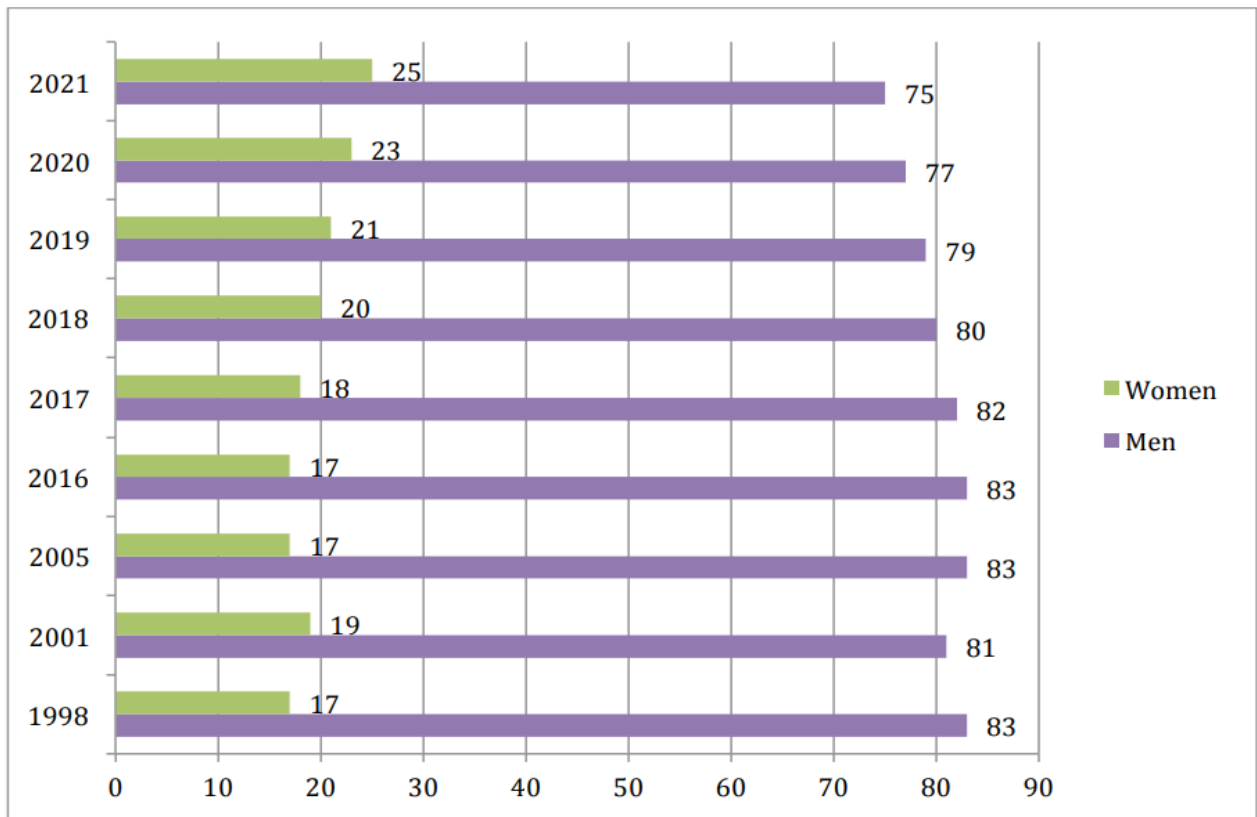


Figure 3: Historical Comparison of Percentages of Behind-the-Scenes Women in Top 250 Films in the US

Source: Lauzen (2022).

The figure above depicts Women producers (32%), followed by executive producers (26%), editors (22%), writers (17%), directors (17%), and cinematographers (6%). Only two roles experienced increases in the percentages of women in 2021, executive producers and producers. The Historical overview above reveals a concerning pattern of underrepresentation of women in major roles in the US film industry. From the 1990s to the present, women have been disproportionately underrepresented in key creative roles, hindering their ability to shape narratives and contribute fully to the industry. DuVernay (2015) argued that women's inability to tell their stories was misguided and steeped in patriarchy. DuVernay (2015) further stated that there was an antagonistic context toward images of women by women. These images by black, brown, and indigenous people are outside of the dominant culture (Bastow, 2015).

## **4.2 Defining the Film Sector**

The film sector refers to a distinct segment of the entertainment industry that encompasses activities related to the production, distribution, exhibition, and consumption of films (Finney, 2014a). It represents a dynamic and interconnected ecosystem involving various stakeholders, including filmmakers, production companies, distributors, exhibitors, and audiences (Nicoli, 2016). The film sector consists of the creation of audio-visual content, ranging from feature films to documentaries and short films, through a multi-stage process that includes scriptwriting, financing, pre-production, production, post-production, and marketing (Makanishe and Khuluse, 2018). There are three main film and media hubs or destinations popular with both international and local productions in South Africa. These hubs are the Western Cape, followed by Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. During 2013, more than 50% of the film projects in South Africa were centralised around Gauteng and the Western Cape (NFVF, 2013).

Throughout the years, the film and media sector in South Africa has experienced tremendous growth and development, evolving into a dynamic and thriving industry that now competes on a global scale. The sector is renowned for producing exceptional content showcasing its professionals' immense creative talent and is widely recognised as a highly professional service sector with a strong reputation for quality (Grant Thornton South Africa, 2017). As a medium, the film industry plays a crucial role in communicating ideas and providing information. A further advantage of the industry is its employment creation potential. The industry generates jobs directly in companies involved in production, postproduction, casting, crewing, equipment hire, set design and property supply. It generates many more jobs indirectly in the support and hospitality industries, stimulating business in hotels, catering companies, restaurants, and transport providers (Tuomi, 2005). The post-apartheid government identified the film industry as an economic sector with excellent growth potential. In 1995, when the country first became a viable location venue for feature film and television productions, the industry was reported to have employed around 4,000 people. This has since grown to approximately 30,000 people, with further jobs and earnings created in film-related transport, hospitality and catering sectors not included in this estimate (Visser, 2014).

## **4.3 The Film Sector Value Chain**

The film sector value chain can be conceptualised as a series of interrelated stages that collectively contribute to the production and distribution of films. These stages typically include pre-production, production, post-production, distribution, exhibition, and consumption

(Benghozi *et al.*, 2015). Each stage involves specific activities, processes, and stakeholders working together to create and deliver films to audiences.

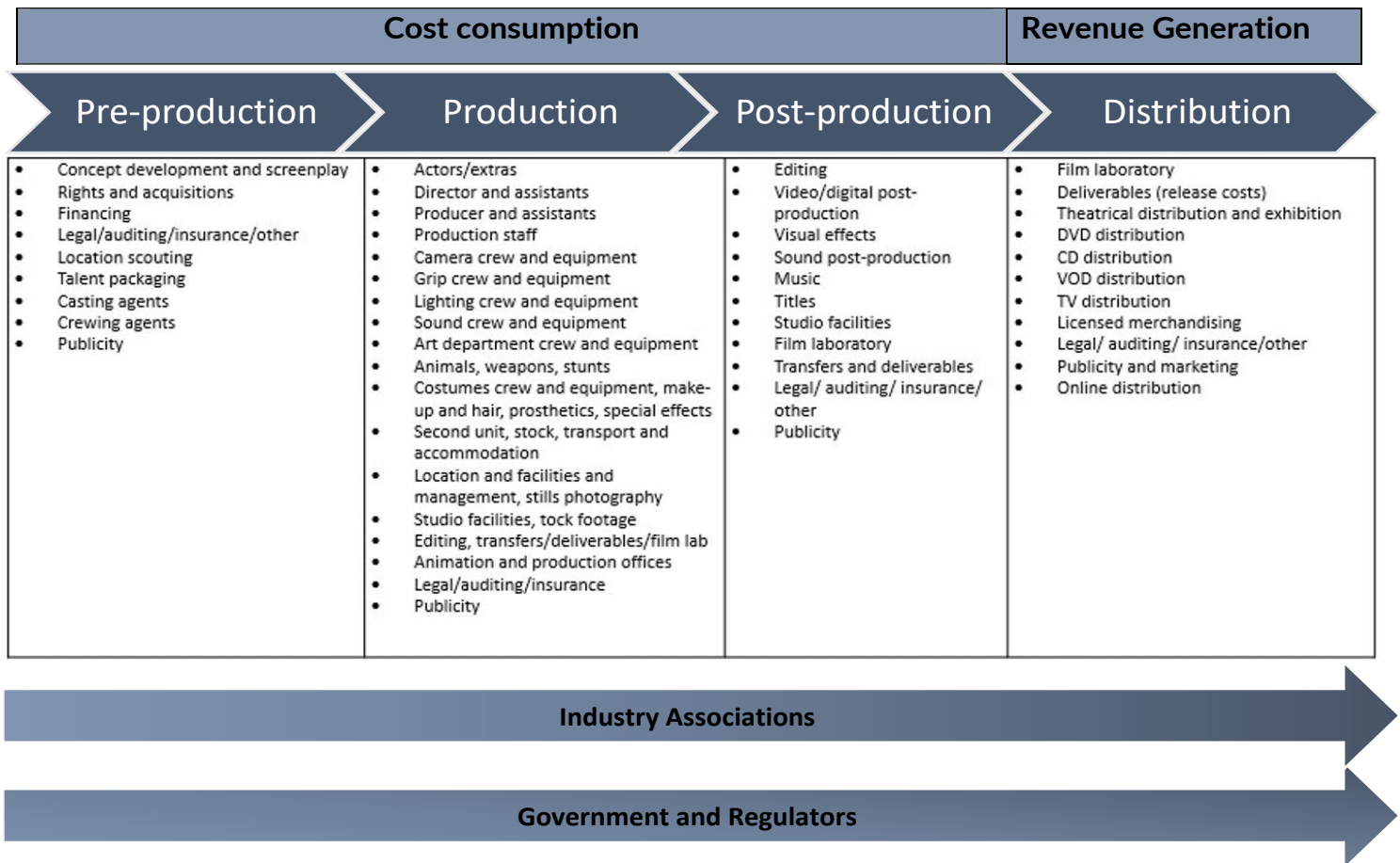


Figure 4: The Filmmaking Process and The Film Sector Value Chain

Source: Deloitte Best Practice Research (2013).

### 1.1.1. Development and Pre-production Stage

The processes of developing a film incorporate concept development, packaging, and financing for the film. In concept development, the idea is formed, target audience research is conducted, and, finally, the preferred producers, directors and actors are selected to support the creation of the film (Urban Econ Development Economists, 2021). During this stage, the film idea is packaged in an attractive form and used to obtain funding. The financing stage is vital as the sector is perceived as high in costs and risk (NFVF, 2017).



The pre-production phase is one of the most complicated and important phases of film production. It is often deemed unnecessary by some filmmakers, to give so much attention to this phase, but most of them had to pay the price for this attitude during the production/shooting phase. In pre-production, all the planning is done (Du Toit, 2010). Shooting a film without proper planning can be disastrous for the budget and the schedule, which is exactly what pre-production is all about. During this phase, all the planning is done regarding the budget, schedule, crew, locations, equipment, design, postproduction, safety, travel, accommodations, special requirements casting etc. Some of the processes and production sometimes take place in the pre-production stage. For example, “hire Director” could occur in the development phase, depending on the circumstances (Du Toit, 2010).

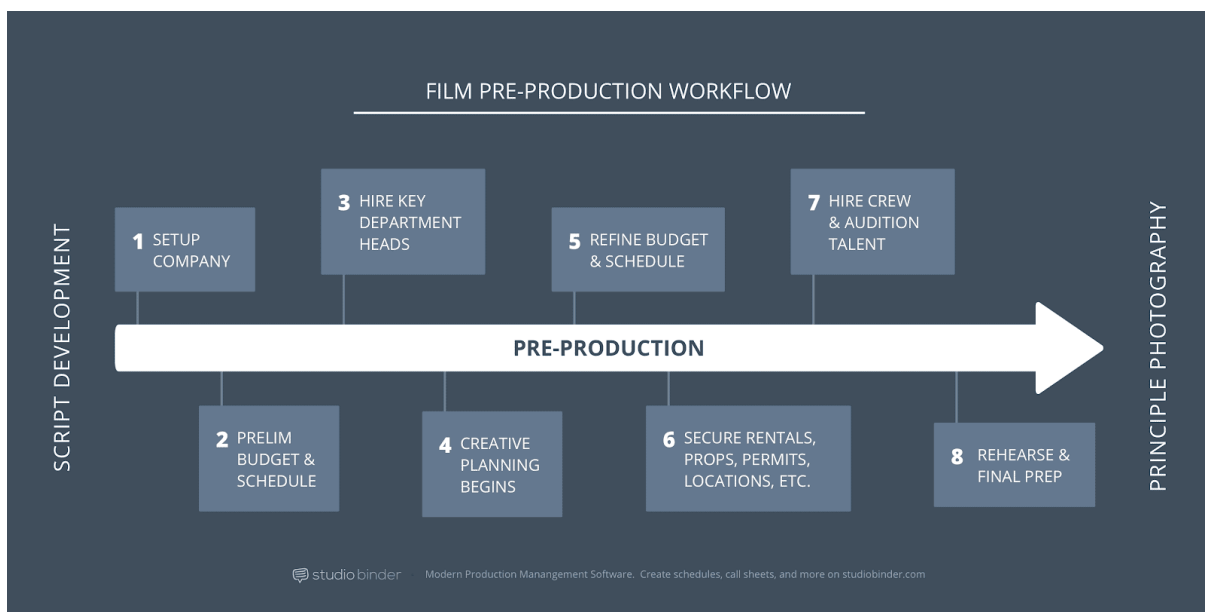


Figure 5: Development and Pre-Production stage  
Source: Studiobinder (2023).

### 1.1.2. Production Stage

Production, also referred to as the principal photography, is the phase known to most people. The production stage involves the actual shooting of the film, including capturing visuals, recording audio, and coordinating the activities of the cast and crew. This stage requires collaboration between directors, cinematographers, production designers, and various technical professionals to bring the script to life (KZN Film, 2021). According to Grant Thornton South Africa (2017), the following activities form part of the production phase:

- Creating the studio environment.
- Acquiring and activating the necessary equipment for the camera, lighting, and sound teams.
- Coordinating the work of costume designers, make-up artists, camera, lighting, and sound experts.
- Directing the actors.
- Managing the location and studio facilities.
- Organising transfers, accommodation, and catering.
- Managing the finances.
- Liaising with local authorities.

Although the production office is still complex at work, during the shoot, all eyes are on the set. This is where everything could go wrong or where the vision of the film is finally realised. It all depends on how thorough the planning was during the pre-production phase. One of the main challenges with this phase is to keep within budget and schedule, and this will take commitment from the whole production crew. The most important aim or desire for this phase is for the director to achieve her creative vision for the film (Du Toit, 2010).

### **1.1.3. Post-production Stage**

This is the phase where all the elements come together. The postproduction phase was not meant for the correction of all the mistakes phase. Mistakes should be minimised during the production phase before they reach the post (Du Toit, 2010). Postproduction does not start at the end of the production phase. Rather, it starts after the first day of shooting because post-production saves as it comes in, commonly referred to as 'dailies' (Du Toit, 2010). The postproduction of a film is highly technical, and there are many ways in which it could be done with the advent of digital editing and footage; the options are infinite. This stage involves editing, sound design, visual effects, and other processes that refine and enhance the filmed content. Editors, sound engineers, visual effects artists, and post-production supervisors play crucial roles in this stage, working to achieve the desired artistic vision and technical quality (KZNFilm, 2021). It can be a daunting task, but luckily when hiring a crew, one can rely on the fact that each member knows their area of expertise (Du Toit, 2010). Without the post-production process, you simply have a raw video that may or may not tell the story you want to portray. Post-production carves and gives the final picture to the film. In truth, raw material is frequently shot in the most efficient order for the performers, location, and other considerations rather than the order intended to be presented. Therefore, it's unlikely that

showing unedited footage would make sense, let alone provide a compelling story (Princy, 2020). Every aspect of post-production contributes to the film's overall story. Background music, for example, establishes the piece's mood and tone, which is then reinforced by colour grading. In addition, you can bring a movie or video (Princy, 2020).

#### **1.1.4. Distribution Stage**

The final phase of filmmaking is distribution. This is where producers look to make a return on investment (ROI). The producers sell the screening right to the distributors, who run promotional marketing, advertise the movie, and promote it to get views. The box office collection depends on how big a budget the movie is or how many known faces there are in your cast (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023). This impacts the price of resale values, such as television broadcast rights or distribution of your content on over-the-top (OTT) platforms. You can release the film in theatres or OTT depending on your distribution plan (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023). With the rapid digital growth and inclusion of technology, the audience is watching content in different ways such as Streaming services such as Netflix, Cinemas and Box office. To accommodate these changes, the distribution phase is constantly evolving. The cast of a film typically works hard and tries to promote the film. Sometimes the producers interact with the press and public before the release of the movie (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023). There are some great ways to promote a film, including submitting the movie to film festivals and launching teasers and trailers on leading video platforms and television channels. Depending on the scale of its release, producers may also promote their films internationally.

#### **1.1.5. Exhibition Stage**

The exhibition stage involves the public screening of films in cinemas, film festivals, and other venues. It encompasses activities related to scheduling, ticketing, projection, and audience engagement. Cinema operators, festival organizers, and event managers contribute to the successful exhibition of films (Benghozi *et al.*, 2015).

#### **1.1.6. Consumption Stage**

The consumption stage represents the ultimate audience experience of watching films. It involves the engagement, appreciation, and interpretation of films by viewers. Audiences play an integral role in shaping the success and impact of films, providing feedback, and driving demand for future content (Benghozi *et al.*, 2015).

#### 4.4 Trends in the Film Sector: International, National and Provincial Perspectives

The film sector, often referred to as the cinema industry, has undergone significant transformations over the years. Its global appeal is fuelled by technological advancements, increased accessibility, and a diverse range of content. This section delves into the various aspects of the film sector, including international, national, and provincial perspectives.

##### 4.4.1 The International Film Sector

The international film sector encompasses the production, distribution, and consumption of films on a global scale. The rise of digital platforms and online streaming services has enabled films to reach audiences beyond national boundaries. According to recent data from the Motion Picture Association (MPA) (2021), the international box office accounted for more than 50% of the global film industry's revenue. This highlights the immense influence and significance of the international film market. International collaborations have also played a vital role in the sector's growth. Yin and Derudder (2021) stated that co-productions between countries have become increasingly common, allowing filmmakers to pool resources, talent, and cultural elements to create unique and compelling narratives. The international film sector encompasses various countries and cultures, with Hollywood as the dominant player. Figure 6 illustrates the global box office revenue distribution by region.



Figure 6: Global Box Office Revenue Distribution by Region

Source: MPA (2021).

Hollywood's dominance in the global film market is evident from Figure 6, which presents the top-grossing films worldwide, with a majority produced by major U.S. studios. It is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic might have contributed to the figures presented above.

Rank ^	Release Group	Worldwide ◇
1	The Super Mario Bros. Movie	\$1,346,485,054
2	Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3	\$843,618,544
3	Fast X	\$704,709,660
4	Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse	\$675,409,269
5	The Little Mermaid	\$556,404,338
6	Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania	\$476,071,180
7	Transformers: Rise of the Beasts	\$427,142,604
8	John Wick: Chapter 4	\$426,978,565
9	Mission: Impossible - Dead Reckoning Part One	\$370,853,469
10	Elemental	\$356,633,827

Figure 7: Top-Grossing films Worldwide

Source: Box Office Mojo (2023).

Despite Hollywood's dominance, the rise of international co-productions is reshaping the industry. Figure 7 below shows the growth in the number of international co-productions over the past few years, indicating increased collaboration between countries.



Figure 8: Growth in International Co-Productions

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory (2021).

The emergence of online streaming platforms or digital streaming has also had a significant impact on the film sector. Figure 9 illustrates the rise in global streaming subscribers, highlighting the increasing importance of digital distribution. Streaming services have changed the film industry in numerous ways particularly how films are financed and produced. With the rise of independent production companies, filmmakers now have more opportunities to secure funding for their projects and have creative control as they are not held to the demands of traditional studios (Gaustad, 2019). The advantage of streaming is the ability to reach a wider audience. With streaming services, films are viewed by people worldwide, leading to increased exposure and revenue. Conversely, the negative impact of streaming on the industry is the reduced revenue from streaming compared to traditional distribution methods. While streaming services offer a convenient way for audiences to access content, they typically pay less per view than a traditional theatrical release or DVD sale. This can make it difficult for

independent filmmakers to recoup their production costs (Gaustad, 2019).

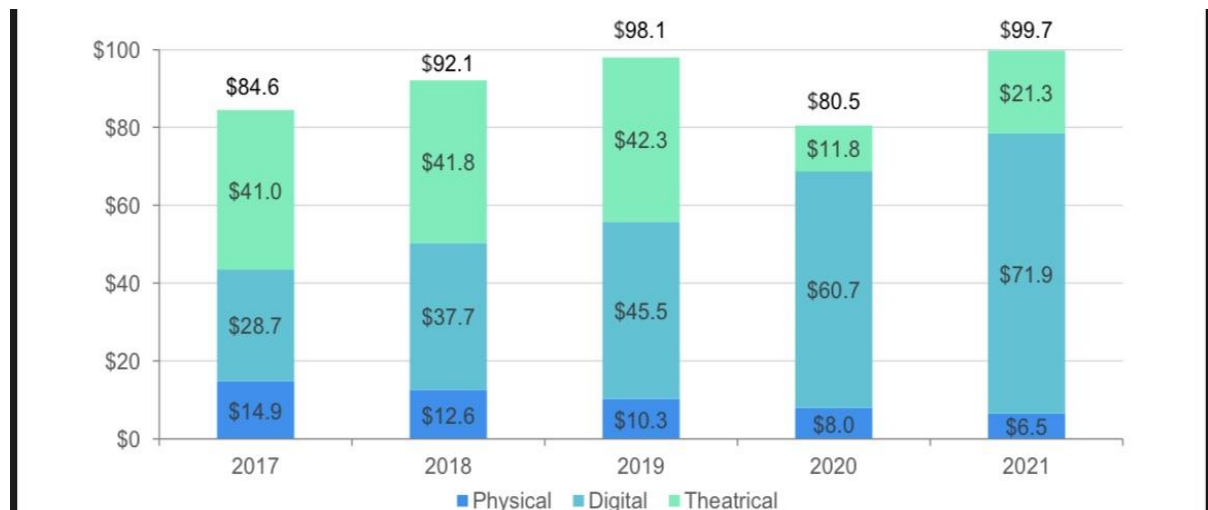


Figure 9: Global Streaming Subscribers

Source: MPA (2021).

#### 4.4.2 The South African Film Sector

The history of the South African film industry dates to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when the country saw its first silent films (Botha, 2012). However, during the apartheid era, filmmaking faced heavy censorship and restrictions, stifling creative expression and diversity. It was only in the 1990s, following the end of apartheid, that the industry began to flourish with newfound freedom of expression (Armes, 2006). In recent decades, the South African film industry has witnessed a surge in local productions across various genres, including drama, comedy, documentary, and historical films (Brown, 2023). As filmmakers explored themes of identity, culture, and social issues, the industry gained recognition for its authentic and thought-provoking narratives.

One of the most significant strengths of the South African film industry lies in its commitment to representation and cultural diversity. By telling stories from diverse ethnic backgrounds and exploring the complexities of the nation's history, filmmakers have contributed to a more inclusive and comprehensive representation of South Africa's cultural fabric. The industry has also been proactive in elevating marginalized voices and shedding light on issues such as apartheid, racial tensions, LGBTQ+ rights, and social inequalities. Productions like *Tsotsi* (2005), *District 9* (2009), *Spud* (2010), *Long Walk to Freedom* (2013), *Inxeba* (2017) and *Desmond's Not Here Anymore* (short film in 2021) have garnered international acclaim and opened doors

for South African filmmakers to share their stories on the global stage through short films and series such as *Kings of Joburg* and *Blood and Water* on Netflix.

Efforts to nurture emerging talent have been crucial to the growth of the South African film industry. Various film schools such as AFDA, workshops, and funding initiatives have emerged to support aspiring filmmakers, actors, writers, and technicians. These endeavours have contributed to the rise of a new generation of South African filmmakers, bringing fresh perspectives and creativity to the industry. Film festivals such as the Durban International Film Festival and the Cape Town International Film Market and Festival have played instrumental roles in providing platforms for emerging filmmakers to showcase their work and network with industry professionals.

The South African film industry has embraced international collaborations and co-productions, fostered global partnerships, and increased the reach of local films (Moyer-Duncan, 2021). NFVF (2021) stated that collaborating with filmmakers from different countries has allowed South African stories to reach international audiences and brought foreign investment and expertise to local productions. Through international collaborations, South African filmmakers have gained exposure to global best practices, which, in turn, has elevated the overall quality of their productions. Such ventures have also facilitated the export of South African cinema to various markets, positively impacting the industry's revenue and growth.

#### **4.4.2.1 Contribution of the Film Industry to GDP and Employment**

The film industry is a significant creative sector that not only entertains audiences worldwide but also contributes to the economic development of countries. Phiri (2021) emphasized the positive economic impact of the film industry. The production and distribution of films and television shows generate revenue, stimulate local businesses, and attract investment in the host regions. Moreover, the film industry has a multiplier effect, creating job opportunities in various sectors, including hospitality, transportation, and catering. The NFVF (2021) highlights the film industry's direct and indirect contributions to a country's GDP. Direct contributions include revenue generated from ticket sales, film production, and distribution. Indirect contributions stem from the spending of film industry employees, investments in local infrastructure, and tourism generated by film-related attractions. The direct contribution of the film industry to the economy of South Africa is projected at R3,86 billion. An additional R3,31 billion is projected to have been generated through indirect (R946.07m) and induced (R2,36



billion) impacts, resulting in a total contribution to the local economy of R7,18 billion (NFVF, 2021).

According to NFVF (2021), the film industry provides employment opportunities for a diverse range of professionals, including actors, directors, producers, technicians, and support staff. Furthermore, the sector stimulates employment in related industries, such as marketing, advertising, and post-production services. Despite these positive outcomes, employment in the film industry can be precarious and intermittent, particularly for freelancers and independent filmmakers. While the film industry's economic contributions are evident in major production hubs, such as Hollywood, Bollywood, and Nollywood, regional disparities exist in other parts of the world.

*Table 1: Industry Economic Impact 2019/20*

	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total
Production (R million)	R3 868.78	R946.07	R2 366.36	R7 181.20
GDP at market prices (R million)	R522.33	R157.01	R408.41	R1 087.75
Employment (Number)	18 104	3 302	10 039	31 444
Total Annualised Payroll (R million)	R108.67	R30.70	R78.40	R217.76
Household Income (R million)	R370.58	R119.77	R312.26	R802.62
Contribution to Taxes (R million)	R46.57	R12.66	R32.03	R91.26

Source: NFVF economic impact report (2020/2021).

Table 2: Industry Economic Impact 2020/21

	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total
Production (R million)	R1 571.80	R384.37	R961.40	R2 917.56
GDP at market prices (R million)	R212.21	R63.79	R165.93	R441.93
Employment (Number)	7 355	1 341	4 079	12 775
Total Annualised Payroll (R million)	R44.15	R12.47	R31.85	R88.47
Household Income (R million)	R150.56	R48.66	R126.87	R326.09
Contribution to Taxes (R million)	R18.92	R5.14	R13.01	R37.08

Source: NFVF economic impact report (2020/2021).

As shown in Tables 1 and 2, the contribution of the film industry to the economy of South Africa is projected at R2,91 billion in 2020/21, down from R7,18 billion in 2019/20. Household income declined by R476.53m in 2020/21 compared to 2019/20. The film industry is estimated to have suffered losses of 18 669 FTE jobs because of the COVID-19 pandemic, amounting to R129.29m loss in remuneration. The industry's contribution to government taxes declined by R54.18m.

While economic impact is essential, the film industry also holds cultural and artistic significance. Films serve as vehicles for storytelling, preserving cultural heritage, and fostering social cohesion. Measuring and acknowledging the cultural value of the film industry is essential for holistic assessments of its contributions to society. By understanding the economic impact, employment generation, regional disparities, government incentives, challenges, and opportunities, policymakers and industry stakeholders can work together to nurture a thriving film industry that drives economic growth and enriches cultural diversity and artistic expression globally.

#### 4.4.2.2 South Africa's Best Performing Films

According to NFVF (2020), in the year 2019, South Africa released a total of 190 films in cinemas. Among these, only 22 titles were produced locally. However, these 22 titles managed to earn a commendable total of R59.7 million in box office revenues. This revenue figure represents a significant increase of 18% when compared to the financial year of 2018/2019 (NFVF, 2020). These statistics highlight the potential of the South African film industry, even though the number of locally produced films is relatively small. As such, it is recommended that more emphasis is placed on the development of locally produced films to further boost the industry and increase its profitability. According to the South African Box Office report released by NFVF (2021), the revenue from all films released in South Africa between 2012 and 2019 has been steadily increasing. However, in 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns, there was a sharp decline in revenue. Nevertheless, there is a forecasted upward trend in revenue for 2021 (Box Office Office Report, 2021).

Table 3: Top 10 – South African produced films-2019

Top 10, SA Produced Films, 2019					
No #	Movie Title	No# of Weeks	No# of Screens	BOG at Release	Box Office Gross
1	Kandasamys - The Wedding	13	52	R5 725 910	R19 253 079
2	Matwetwe	12	17	R980 762	R6 473 633
3	Losing Lerato	22	26	R821 224	R4 979 930
4	Zulu Wedding	12	59	R746 049	R4 372 428
5	Dominee Tienie	9	40	R578 849	R4 221 158
6	3 Days to Go	8	31	R892 936	R3 479 599
7	Fiela Se Kind	5	59	R823 748	R3 139 869
8	Blessers	16	53	R663 508	R3 123 763
9	Love Lives Here	11	41	R631 637	R2 866 485
10	Kings of Mulberry Street	11	30	R628 478	R2 406 840

Source: NFVF (2019).

In 2019 several South African films received awards and nominations at various prestigious events (NFVF, 2019-2020). Amongst the top 10 shown above, Zulu Wedding, a romantic comedy directed by Linen Sekeleoane was announced as the Best Narrative Feature Film at the Pan African Film Festival (PAFF) in Los Angeles in February 2020 (NFVF, 2019-2020). The

award was a massive achievement because the producer is a black female and highlights the growing prominence of South Africa's film industry, which has gained a reputation for producing world-class productions that appeal to a global audience.

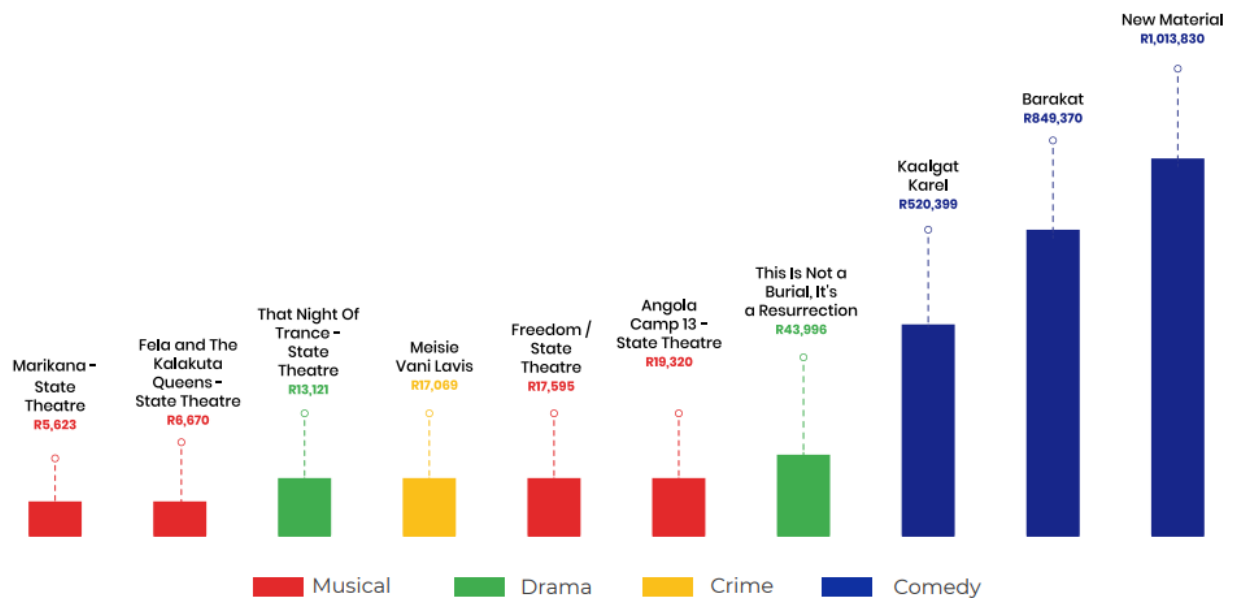


Figure 10: Top 10 films produced in South Africa in 2021

Source: Box office report (2021)

The 2021 Annual Box Office Report (Jan – Dec 2021) indicated that locally produced films that achieved the most success last year were comedies. This trend is also reflected as a continued one for this 2022 period.

#### 4.4.3 The Provincial Film Sector

Over the past decade, the KZN film industry has experienced remarkable growth, attracting local and international filmmakers to its diverse and scenic locations (KZN Film, 2022). This growth can be attributed to several factors, including the province's stunning natural landscapes, well-developed infrastructure, and supportive local government policies. Thus, the presence of skilled and talented filmmakers, actors, and technicians has contributed to the industry's rapid expansion (KZN Film, 2022). The KwaZulu-Natal film industry is poised for continued growth and success. The province's unique cultural diversity, historical sites, and breath-taking landscapes present numerous opportunities for innovative storytelling and collaboration with international filmmakers. Additionally, as the demand for diverse and

authentic stories increases globally, KZN's rich cultural heritage can position it as a hub for unique and compelling narratives.

KwaZulu-Natal has seen an upsurge in film productions, including feature films, television series, and documentaries. The province has served as a backdrop for various high-profile productions such as *Reyka*, *Durban Gen*, and *Imbewu: The Seed*, providing a unique on-screen identity that showcases the region's rich cultural heritage and scenic beauty. Local filmmakers and artists have made significant contributions to the industry, garnering critical acclaim and recognition both domestically and internationally.

The KZN film industry has not only contributed to the cultural representation of the province but has also brought substantial economic benefits (KZN Film, 2021). Film productions have led to job creation across various sectors, including catering, accommodation, transportation, and equipment rentals. According to a report by the KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission (KZN Film), the film industry contributed approximately R340 million to the provincial economy in 2019, making it a vital economic driver for the region.

The growth of the KZN film industry has prompted an increased focus on skills development and training initiatives (KZN Film, 2022). Local institutions and organizations have partnered with industry professionals to offer workshops, seminars, and mentorship programs to nurture the next generation of filmmakers and technicians. This emphasis on skills development has empowered local talent and has further strengthened the industry's growth potential. Despite its impressive growth, the KZN film industry faces some challenges. These challenges include limited funding and resources for film projects, especially for independent filmmakers, which hampers the industry's sustainable growth. Additionally, competition with other South African provinces and international film destinations requires continuous efforts to promote KZN as a preferred filming location. There is low participation of women in the KZN film industry because there are limited production houses in the province – *Uzalo*, *Umkhokha*, *Durban Gen* and *Imbewu: The Seed*. latter, *Durban Gen* and *Imbewu*, were cancelled without explanation, and *Umkhokha: The Curse* might be picked up for a new season. The production team is either unemployed, actively seeking employment or relocated to Gauteng or Cape Town for long-term employment. It was argued, at the KZN Film Festival 2023, that production in the province is short-term and its longevity is contingent on funding. The panellists raised concerns on the issue of funding to cater for short films, series, and movies, particularly by female directors and screenwriters (KZN Film, 2023).

According to the Labour Market (2023), the under-representation of women in the film industry workforce is symptomatic of general employment trends, societal inequalities, and disparities observed globally and in South Africa. The most recent global female labour force participation rate is estimated to be approximately 47%, compared to 72% for males (International Labour Organisation, 2022). According to Statistics South Africa (2023), unemployment statistics for women remain higher than the national average, with 35,7% of South African women in the labour force currently without work and actively looking for work. The impact of unemployment is particularly severe for women as the unemployment rate for men shows a consistent decrease of 0.7% points on a quarterly basis and 2.6% points annually. Black African women face an even more challenging situation with an unemployment rate of 39.8% in Q2:2023, which is higher than both the national average and other demographic groups (Statistics South Africa, 2023).

#### **4.4.3.1 Institutional Arrangement of the KZN Film Sector (The KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission)**

The KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission is responsible for marketing KwaZulu-Natal internationally and locally. Its objective is to position KwaZulu-Natal as the local destination of choice. It also aims to create enabling environments for filmmakers. According to the KZN Film Annual Report (2022), the KZN Film Commission derives its mandate from the KZN Film Act No. 3 of 2010. The objectives of the KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission are connected to the Commission's mission which is to be a catalyst for transformation, job creation and sustainability through funding, Industry Skills Development, and the promotion of KwaZulu-Natal. The KZN Film Commission provides clear objectives linked to its transformation agenda, which are:

- To provide and encourage the provision of opportunities for persons, especially from disadvantaged communities,
- To enter and participate in the film industry in the province,
- To address historical imbalances in the infrastructure and in the distribution of skills and resources in the film industry in the province (KZN Film, 2022).

As per recent reports, the initiatives undertaken by KZN Film have shown a positive impact on the designated groups. KZN Film has implemented a series of targets aimed at increasing the participation of women and youth in various programs such as the film fund, markets and festivals, incubation, bursaries, and short courses. For instance, a procurement spend target of

60% has been set for women and 25% for youth to enhance their involvement in the said programs. Furthermore, KZN Film has also introduced a target for the participation of people with disabilities, ranging between 5% and 10%, across all relevant programs. Finally, KZNFC aims to involve children in the programs by setting a target of 5% for screenings, audience development and schools' programs (KZN Film, 2020).

The KZN Film Commission's 5-year strategic plan for 2020/2024 outlines their efforts to tackle challenges hindering the competitiveness of the KZN film sector. Currently, KZN holds 12% of the market share, while Gauteng and Western Cape lead with over 20% each. To bolster the local industry and ensure its sustainability, KZN Film supports it through its film fund. However, the budget limitations of film funding sometimes hinder big productions that could potentially generate significant box office revenues. As a result, filmmakers seek additional funding from other entities such as NFVF, DTI, and other Commissions, or through broadcaster commissioning agreements (KZN Film, 2022).

The lack of funding options poses a significant growth obstacle for the industry, and private investment remains limited due to perceived high-risk and low-return factors (KZN Film, 2022). Unlike some other countries, the film sector in South Africa heavily relies on state funding, without the benefit of tax incentives and rebates (KZN Film, 2022). KZN Film (2022) stated that based on data from 2014/15 to 2017/18, productions funded by KZN Film managed to earn between R1 million to R3 million in local box office revenues, accounting for 0.1% to 16% of the initial production budget. Typically, local films receive investments ranging from R7 million to R14 million. However, exceptions, such as "Keeping Up with the Kandasamys" and "Kandasamys: The Wedding", have performed exceptionally well, each making nearly twenty million at the box office.

A considerable number of emerging filmmakers in KZN opt for micro-budget films or made-for-TV productions, with an average budget of R500,000 (KZN Film, 2023). To support this trend, KZN Film established a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with SABC, providing local filmmakers the opportunity to create content for the public broadcaster. Through this collaboration, ten projects were selected for mentorship and training, to develop scripts and eventually broadcasting them on SABC television. Furthermore, an MOU was signed with BET to broadcast eight short films developed and co-funded by KZN Film (KZN Film, 2022).

The micro-budget research conducted in 2018 highlighted that micro-budget films serve as a unique platform for emerging filmmakers' development and contribute to the production of local *isiZulu* content, aligning with the provincial film sector strategy (KZN Film, 2022). Creating

high-quality local content is vital for building a growing and loyal consumer base. The establishment of the film cluster has been instrumental in the province, as it provides emerging filmmakers with access to equipment, office space, sound editing, and post-production facilities at affordable rates (KZN Film, 2022).

#### **4.5 Gender Dynamics in the Film Industry Internationally**

The representation and participation of women continue to be a lingering question in many industries in South Africa and around the globe, the film industry is no exception. Gill (2013) asserted that across various genres (such as film, television, advertising, and news media), women, minority ethnic groups, and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are significantly under-represented in contrast to males, white people, and those from the middle and upper classes. A study by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2021) confirmed this by pointing out that gender disparities exist in the film and audio-visual industry throughout the African continent, with Central Africa exhibiting the most significant gap, where 98% of practitioners estimate that the ratio of women in the sector is less than 10%. In Eastern and Western Africa, 50% of practitioners believe that the proportion of women in the field is less than 10%. South Africa is no exception, from its inception, males have dominated the South African film industry.

Women's representation in the film industry has been a subject of considerable scholarly attention globally. Studies have consistently highlighted the glaring gender disparities that persist in the sector (Kangas et al., 2014; Brannon Donoghue, 2022; Brannon Donoghue, 2023). According to a study conducted by the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film in 2022, women comprised 24% of directors, writers, producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top 250 grossing films, down 1% from 2021. The study further revealed that women comprised just 7% of cinematographers working on the top 250 grossing films of 2022, which is up only 3% from 1998. The number of female editors hasn't improved much either, increasing from 20% in 1998 to 21% in 2022. Women didn't fare much better in other roles, comprising only 19% of writers, 25% of executive producers, and 31% of producers in 2022. For the top 100 grossing films, the numbers were similar, with women faring best as producers (28%), editors (18%), writers (17%), directors (11%), and cinematographers (8%). Only 9% of composers of the top 100 films were women (Elsesser, 2023).

In other countries, however, efforts to improve women's representation in the film industry have been evident in recent years, with some progress being made. The Cannes Film Festival,



for instance, saw an increase in the number of female-directed films showcased in 2023, reaching 26%, up from 18% in the previous year. Additionally, the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) reported a rise in the percentage of female nominees across various categories, reaching 35% in 2022 (Erbland, 2023). These developments demonstrate a growing awareness of the importance of gender parity in the industry, but much work remains to be done to ensure equal opportunities and visibility for women in the global film landscape. The gender pay gap affects most industries, with women generally earning less than their male counterparts – and Hollywood is no different. It was revealed that women stars earn around US\$1.1m less than male actors with similar experience (Sanchez, 2019). The income gap appears to shrink a bit among higher earners, but even among actors who have ten years or more of experience, the difference remains statistically significant. According to Sanchez (2019), female talent earned on average US\$2.2m less per film which was 56% less than men. The difference in pay can be explained by the myriad factors that determine an actor's pay. This includes the financial success of the previous films that actors had been in, the genre of the film and the actor's popularity (based on things like social media followers). Sanchez (2019), accounted for variations in time spent shooting, evaluated the profitability and the production budget of the current film, and took into consideration other movie and actor characteristics.

#### **4.5.1 Gender Dynamics in South Africa**

Women's representation in the film industry in South Africa has been a subject of concern for many years, with significant disparities persisting across various roles in the sector. In 2004, research by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) reported that the industry employed more men than women and that the male: female ratio was slightly higher (61:39) among permanent employees than freelance/ temporary employees (56:44). On the contrary, the freelance/temporary worker category between the white/black ratio was 23:77, (HSRC, 2004). This trend continues to date, with a higher concentration of women in temporary work. NFVF (2017) reported that 15.78% of women were employed full-time and 37.66% freelancing due to hiring practices within the industry. In a recent study, the National Film and Video Foundation (2018) identified several systemic, institutional, and cultural barriers that prevent women from entering and breaking into higher-ranking positions in the film industry. These barriers were gender disparities in the sector, equal funding access, investor risk aversion, a lower share of broadcasting funds for female directors, and low representation of women on commissioning and funding panels (NFVF, 2018). Another study conducted by the South

African Screen Federation (SASFED) in 2021 revealed that women accounted for only 28% of directors, 32% of writers, and 23% of producers in locally produced films. This underrepresentation of women in key creative positions underscores the need for greater efforts to foster gender diversity and inclusivity within the industry.

Despite these challenges, there have been notable strides towards improving women's representation in the South African film industry. Initiatives such as the Women's Film and Television Empowerment Programme (WFT EP) have played a crucial role in promoting gender equality by providing training and mentorship opportunities for aspiring female filmmakers. Moreover, the success of films directed or produced by women, such as "Rafiki" by Wanuri Kahiu and "Ayanda" by Sara Blecher, has shown the potential for powerful storytelling when diverse voices are given a platform. However, systemic barriers persist, hindering further progress. Limited access to funding and resources, coupled with entrenched gender biases, continues to impede women from fully participating in the industry.

#### **4.6 Challenges Observed in the Film Industry**

##### **4.6.1 Barriers to entry into the Film Sector**

The film industry is an alluring and competitive field that attracts aspiring filmmakers, actors, and creative professionals. However, it is not without challenges, and aspiring individuals often encounter barriers to entry that can impede their progress and success. This is particularly true for black women, who face intersectional obstacles that exacerbate their gender and race disadvantage, resulting in additional barriers to achieving senior roles (NFVF, 2018). Additionally, societal expectations surrounding gender roles further exacerbate the barriers faced by females in the film industry. According to Luo and Huang (2022), it is indisputable that women's daily responsibilities within family life, such as pregnancy, childbirth, child education, and household labour, can create significant barriers to their career advancement. These same impediments also manifest themselves within the film industry.

##### **4.6.2 Financial Barriers**

One of the most prominent barriers to entry into the film industry is the substantial financial investment required to produce, distribute, and promote films. Independent filmmakers and

newcomers often struggle to secure funding for their projects, as traditional sources of financing may be risk-averse or prioritize established filmmakers. This financial barrier limits the diversity of voices and perspectives in the industry and hinders the realization of unique and innovative stories (Raats *et al.*, 2018). Other scholars observe that financial barriers often disproportionately affect female filmmakers, who face unjust criticism more frequently than men when they are given key positions (Lauzen, 2012; Kunsey, 2018; Raats *et al.*, 2018). A common criticism is that female filmmakers are more of a financial risk compared to their male counterparts. When faced with large budgets, studio executives tend to fall back on directors who have had box-office hits in the past and these directors are often male (Kennedy, 2010; Lauzen, 2012). This presents a bit of a paradox for women who are required to have prior work experience to prove their worth yet are not given an opportunity to gain that experience due to their gender (Kunsey, 2018).

#### **4.6.3 Lack of Representation and Inclusion**

The film industry has historically struggled with representation and inclusion, particularly for marginalized groups such as women, people of colour, and LGBTQ+ individuals. Limited representation in key decision-making positions and behind-the-camera roles creates a barrier for underrepresented groups to enter the industry and contribute their unique perspectives (Sandoval, 2022).

#### **4.6.4 Access to Education and Training**

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2021), access to quality education and training in filmmaking is critical for developing the necessary skills and knowledge. However, many aspiring filmmakers face barriers in accessing formal education or specialized training programs due to financial constraints or limited availability in certain regions. This lack of education and training opportunities hampers skill development and inhibits career progression. In the context of South Africa, women filmmakers are highly skilled. Most of them (52.15%) have received formal training in film school, while 31% have acquired their skills through experience or self-learning (NFVF, 2022). Some have also participated in mentorships and learnerships, while 7.34% have learned through other means such as workshops, conferences, and film festivals. Despite their skills, women

filmmakers still face challenges in accessing roles and achieving permanency in the industry (NFVF, 2022).

#### **4.6.5 Industry Gatekeeping**

The film industry is often characterized by barriers to entry caused by different stakeholders such as talent agencies, production companies, and studios, who control access to projects, casting opportunities, and distribution channels (Finney, 2014b). Breaking through these gatekeepers can be challenging for newcomers without pre-existing industry connections or influential representation. The gatekeeping practice perpetuates an insular industry culture and restricts opportunities for aspiring talents.

#### **4.6.6 Creative Control and Risk Aversion**

Newcomers in the film industry struggle to maintain creative control over their projects, especially when working with established production companies or studios. Risk-averse attitudes in the industry can lead to formulaic storytelling and limited experimentation, hindering the development of fresh and ground-breaking narratives (Bavana, 2021). The barriers to entry in the film industry discussed above have a significant impact on various groups, including women, who face unique challenges and obstacles in pursuing successful careers in the industry. Financial barriers, limited network and industry connections, lack of representation and inclusion, access to education and training, industry gatekeepers, creative control issues, technological barriers, and risk aversion affect both newcomers and women seeking opportunities in the film industry (NFVF, 2022). However, women encounter additional challenges contributing to their underrepresentation and hindering their participation and success. These challenges include gender inequality and discrimination, lack of role models and mentorship opportunities, limited access to education and training, stereotypical and gender-biased representations, bias in funding and distribution, balancing work and family responsibilities, and sexual harassment (Starmarski and Son Hing, 2015). Addressing these barriers and challenges through policies, programs, and initiatives that promote gender equality, provide support and resources, and foster inclusivity and diversity is crucial for creating a more inclusive and equitable film industry for aspiring filmmakers, actors, and creative professionals, particularly women. By recognizing and overcoming these barriers,

the industry can tap into a wider range of talents, perspectives, and stories, ultimately leading to greater diversity, creativity, and innovation in the world of cinema.

#### **4.7 Challenges Faced by Women in the Film Industry**

The University of Southern California reported that, in Oscar's 95-year history, only 17% of nominees were women and less than 2% were black women. Moreover, only 9% of the directors of the 2022 top 100 earning films list were women, and less than 3% were women of colour (Brown et al., 2023). In South Africa, women were less likely to break into senior roles that impact decision-making compared to their male counterparts (NFVF, 2022). Albeit South African women filmmakers are vastly skilled, with 52.15% having gone through formal film school training and another 31% having acquired their skills through experience or being self-taught (NFVF, 2022). Women in the film industry face numerous challenges of gender inequality and discrimination, lack of mentorships, lack of training and education, bias in funding, and balancing family life and work, amongst other issues that hinder their participation and success in the industry. The challenges faced by women in the film industry were drawn from NFVF, 2018; Ehrich et al., 2022 and Sandoval, 2022. The challenges are discussed below:

##### **4.7.1 Gender Inequality and Discrimination**

Gender inequality and discrimination contribute to the low participation of women in film by creating a hostile or unequal work environment, which makes it difficult for women to succeed and advance in their careers (Jones, 2019). The challenges include unequal pay, limited opportunities for promotion, and a lack of support and resources, which have made it difficult for women to compete with their male counterparts (Babic and Hansez, 2021). Malatjie (2022) reported that women also experienced harassment, discrimination, and exclusion based on their gender. According to Sandoval (2022), these factors created a cycle of underrepresentation and marginalization for women in the film industry, making it more difficult for them to succeed and have a voice in shaping the stories and perspectives that are seen on screen. Soloway (2015) as cited in Bastow (2015) argued that male creators and producers need to offer women the chance to write, direct, and empower them through mainstream opportunities once they have written and directed. Bastow (2015) revealed that the marginalisation of women telling their own stories was a highly contested topic. Statistics showed that of the 100 top-grossing films in 2014, 12% had female protagonists; of the top

250, only 17% were directed by women. Ava DuVernay (2015) argued that there was an antagonistic context toward images of women by women, images by black people, brown people, and indigenous people, that are outside of the dominant culture. And the way that things are – they're run by men, there's a comfort level there (Bastow, 2015).

#### **4.7.2 Lack of Role Models and Mentorship Opportunities**

Female graduates often lack access to female mentors who will guide them through the industry and provide them with the skills and knowledge necessary for success (Cross et al., 2019). According to NFVF (2018), the lack of access to mentorship opportunities contributes immensely to the current low representation of women in film and limits their exposure to the industry and access to guidance, support, and networking opportunities. Role models provide inspiration and a sense of possibility, while mentorship can provide practical advice, coaching, and connections that are critical for success in any field (Kearney and Levine, 2020). Women who do not have access to these resources face additional challenges in breaking into the industry, thus discouraging women from pursuing careers in the film industry.

#### **4.7.3 Lack of Access to Education and Training**

Sandoval (2022) revealed that female graduates in film often lack access to the resources and support necessary to gain the skills and experience required to succeed in the industry. Film production and related careers require specialized training and education, and women from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds (who do not have access to these resources) face additional barriers in breaking into institutions of higher learning and the industry (Film Skillset, 2009).

Although representation of female students at top film schools is now roughly equal in terms of gender parity—women represent 51% of graduate students at New York University School of the Arts and 46% at USC's School of Cinematic Arts—that does not mean that women's experience at those schools is the same as their male peers. From the moment they matriculate, the subtle and less subtle messaging to women is that they are not destined to be directors and that their perspectives are less valuable (Jones, 2020).

Jones (2020) reported that, in their study, a survey respondent, a female filmmaker, was sent a list of 100 “films you must see” before arriving at a top film school. Almost every single one was directed by a white man. She had seen almost none of them, and as she watched that

summer, the films said nothing to her. Throughout her film school career, her male classmates would wax lyrical about the genius of these movies, making her feel like an unsophisticated philistine because did not “understand” them.

The survey respondents revealed that male students left film school with their worldviews and dreams validated and reinforced. They were welcomed, heard, understood, and seen giving them the confidence and a sense of entitlement that allows them to assuredly step out into the industry. Female students, by contrast, left film school deflated, demoralized, and confused; feeling a fundamental dissonance with the work they have been told to venerate; and lacking role models (Jones, 2020).

#### **4.7.4 Stereotypical and Gender-Biased Representations**

Stereotypical and gender-biased representations perpetuate harmful and limiting views of women and their capabilities. When women are consistently portrayed as passive, objectified, or relegated to stereotypical roles, it creates a culture that undermines the ambitions and achievements of women and girls (Olorunfemi, 2018). Jean and Feagin (1998) as cited in Terry (2018:2) posited that the negative depiction of black women as “domineering matriarchs or exotic sexual objects was created, and still is perpetuated, by white (usually white male) social scientists, and even by a few black male social scientists trained by the ... images of hypersexuality and overbearingness often merge to symbolize the black woman.” This can also discourage women from pursuing careers in the industry, as they may not see themselves reflected in the stories and characters that are being produced. Additionally, when women are underrepresented in key creative positions, such as directors, writers, and producers, they may be less likely to create stories that challenge and expand traditional representations of gender and diversity (Rattan et al., 2019). This can further entrench gender biases in the film industry and contribute to low participation of women.

The other factor that poses a challenge to women in the film industry, is the notion that the industry is a male-dominated industry where there are male dominant networks (Smith et al., 2013). The informality of film and television employment has a major impact on practitioners, especially women, who are often adversely affected by the unwarranted nature of freelance employment and a male-dominant workplace (Wing-Fai et al., 2015). This combined with the widespread belief that women are riskier than men as creative team members has effects of disproportionately diminishing the chance a woman has of being hired in this role (Verhoeven et al., 2019).

#### **4.7.5 Bias in Funding and Distribution**

Film funding and distribution are key components of the industry, and a lack of access to these resources makes it difficult for women to get their projects off the ground, to reach a wide audience, or to be recognized for their contributions. Engel (2018) posits that lack of access to financial resources is one of the key reasons why fewer female directors make fiction features films. According to Verhoeven et al. (2019), women-directed films with a budget of less than 25 million US dollars, while films directed by men in this budget range were shown to be three times higher the amount. Bias can manifest in various ways, such as a preference for male-led projects, a lack of female representation on funding boards and decision-making committees, and a tendency to undervalue or dismiss the perspectives and experiences of women in the film industry (NFVF, 2018). These factors can create significant barriers for women, who may struggle to get their projects produced, distributed, or recognized, further perpetuating the underrepresentation of women in the film industry. This limits the opportunities for women to showcase their work and reach audiences.

Female directors are faced with gender-specific industry and roadblocks resulting in a struggle not only to create, as is evident in most countries, but also to distribute their work (Liddy, 2020). For instance, some films are gender insensitive and many still abide by the traditional and conservative attitude towards women, in most cases when women are given a voice, it is misused, and when they stand their ground, it is a disastrous cause (Ebewo, 2007). The report on gender equality for directors in the European film industry, discovered that inequality is perpetuated by a combination of factors, including the competitive habits of the marketplace, contemporary industry structures, the impact of new technologies and false assumptions about women's abilities and business risks (NFVF, 2018).

#### **4.7.6 Balancing Work and Family**

Many women in the film industry also face challenges in balancing their careers with family responsibilities. The film industry requires long hours, intense schedules, and travel, which can make it challenging for women who also have family responsibilities to manage. This can lead to women being less able to advance in their careers or commit to leadership positions, as they may not have the flexibility to devote the time and energy that these roles require (Mkosi, 2016). Additionally, the lack of workplace flexibility and family-friendly policies discouraged women from entering and staying in the film industry. This can create a vicious cycle where women are underrepresented in the industry, thus contributes to a lack of support and



resources for women in the field. It is difficult to talk about women and work without talking about children. Workforce patterns, childcare, money, and freelance culture affect women practitioners' decision to have children or not, and whether they can sustain a firm media career as parents (Wing-Fai et al., 2015). The authors argued that sexism that women face in relation to potential parenthood affects all women regardless of whether they were, or wished to become mothers, and found no parallel among men. This widespread sexism is based on the assumption that given male and female candidates with equal qualifications, it would be rational to hire the men (Wing-fall et al., 2015).

#### **4.7.7 Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment can contribute to low participation of women in the film industry by creating a hostile and unsafe work environment. Women who experience sexual harassment may feel discouraged from pursuing careers in the industry, and may also face consequences such as job loss, decreased job satisfaction, or damage to their professional reputation (ILO, 2013). Furthermore, the prevalence of sexual harassment can create a culture of fear or exclusion that makes it difficult for women to succeed and advance in their careers. This can perpetuate a cycle of underrepresentation and marginalization for women in the industry, making it difficult for them to participate fully and make their voices heard. By creating a hostile or unsafe work environment, sexual harassment can be a major barrier for women in the film industry (McLaughlin et al., 2017). For example, household actresses such as Rose McGowan, Gwyneth Paltrow, Ashley Judd and Salma Hayek have come forward to expose powerful men in Hollywood, like movie mogul Harvey Weinstein, for allegedly sexually assaulting women to access the industry and building and maintain their careers, which in Hollywood has been casually termed "being touched" (Puente and Kelly, 2018). The women reported unwanted sexual comments and groping, propositioning women, exposing themselves, coercing women into having sex or doing something sexual, and forcing women to disrobe and appear naked at an audition without warning pertinent to showbiz (Puente and Kelly, 2018). The reports against men in the Hollywood industry sparked #Me too movements and influenced other social movements such as #OscarsSoWhite have shed light on the inadequacies of the film industry in terms of representation both on and off screen. The movement highlighted the lack of racial diversity in the Oscars. Similarly, the #MeToo and "Time's Up" movements aimed to raise awareness and promote advocacy for victims of sexual assault, particularly women. However, despite these social outcries, the film industry still falls short of adequately representing women both on and off-screen (Kunsey, 2018).

In South Africa, similar social movements have been observed, for example in 2017, the South African advocacy group Sisters Working in Film and Television (SWIFT) initiated the #ThatsNotOk campaign. The campaign has produced six short film episodes providing insight into the various forms of sexual harassment and the contexts in which it is prevalent within the South African film and television industries (Paleker, 2020). According to a survey conducted by SWIFT, 75% of women feel unsafe while working on production sets due to the increasing incidents of Gender-Based Violence. Meanwhile, 23% of the respondents reported experiencing unwanted touching while working in the industry. Moreover, 65% of the respondents stated that they had witnessed sexual harassment by someone in a higher position. This means that 70% of the respondents had felt very unsafe on sets, and this can be attributed to the prevalence of sexual assault and the number of incidents that have gone unreported (SABC News, 2021).

Similarly, USA Today in collaboration with The Creative Coalition, Women in Film and Television and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, investigated 843 women working in the entertainment industry in a variety of roles (producers, actors, writers, directors, editors and others) to determine their experiences with sexual misconduct in the workplace. The results revealed that 94% of the surveyed respondents have experienced some form of harassment or assault, often by an older individual in a position of power over the accuser. More than one-fifth of respondents (21%) say they have been forced to do something sexual at least once.

#### **4.7.8 Underpayment of Women in the Film Industry**

Although women's participation in the labour force has increased significantly, they are often employed in low-wage positions and sectors, while men tend to be employed in higher-paying positions and sectors. The differences in the sectors of employment and occupations are the main reason behind this wage gap (Mosomi 2019). As indicated earlier, in the film industry, women are more likely to be employed in freelance and temporary work. NFFV (2017) reported that 15.78% of women were employed full-time and 37.66% were freelancing. Jones (2020) put forward that there were many statistics and much anecdotal evidence across industries suggesting that a “confidence gap” exists among women, such that they resist putting themselves forward. This argument shifts the blame on women for the chronic lack of progress in women’s advancement in the workplace. Packard (2014) reported that the average

woman would only apply to a hypothetical job if she met 90 to 100% of the stated criteria, whereas the average man would apply if he met 60% of the criteria.

#### **4.8 Strategies to Mitigate Low Female Representation in the Film Industry.**

To mitigate the low representation and the challenges that are faced by women in the film industry, several strategies can be implemented:

##### **4.8.1 Encouraging Diversity and Inclusion**

Implementing policies and initiatives that promote diversity and inclusion in the industry can help increase the representation of women and other underrepresented groups in the film industry. This can include affirmative action policies, diversity and inclusion training, and the creation of mentorship and networking opportunities specifically for women (Ozimek, 2020).

##### **4.8.2 Providing Access to Education and Training**

Providing female graduates with access to education and training opportunities can help them gain the skills and experience necessary for success in the film industry. This can include scholarships, workshops, and training programs specifically designed for women (World Bank, 2020).

##### **4.8.3 Supporting Female Filmmakers**

Supporting female filmmakers through grants, funding, and other initiatives can help increase their representation in the industry and provide them with the resources they need to succeed. This can include providing funding for female-led projects, creating incubators and accelerators for female filmmakers, and promoting their work through film festivals and other industry events (Women make Movies, n.d.).

##### **4.8.4 Promoting Gender Equality**

Addressing and combating gender inequality and discrimination in the film industry is crucial in creating a more inclusive and equitable environment for women. This can include implementing gender-sensitive policies and initiatives and encouraging companies to diversify their hiring practices (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2019).

#### **4.8.5 Encouraging Female Mentorship and Networking**

Providing female graduates with access to female mentors who can guide them through the industry and provide them with the skills and knowledge necessary for success can help increase their participation in the industry. This can include mentorship programs, networking events, and the creation of industry groups specifically for women (Harris, 2022). It's also important to note that creating a more inclusive and equitable film industry for women is not only beneficial for women but for the industry. Research has shown that companies with more diverse and inclusive workplace environments are more successful and that films with diverse representation and storytelling tend to perform better at the box office. By promoting women's representation and success in the film industry, the industry can tap into new perspectives and creative ideas, leading to more successful and impactful films.

#### **4.9 Transformation in the Film Industry**

The film industry has undergone a profound transformation in recent decades, driven by technological advancements and globalization. The digital revolution has been a key catalyst for change, as filmmakers embrace digital cameras, visual effects, and CGI to enhance creativity and reduce production costs (Marcus, 2023). This shift towards digital filmmaking has opened new possibilities for storytelling and has democratized access to filmmaking tools, allowing emerging filmmakers to enter the industry (Mbura, 2022). Furthermore, digital distribution and the rise of online streaming platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime have disrupted traditional film distribution models, enabling filmmakers to reach a global audience without the need for conventional theatrical releases (Dhiman, 2023).

Transformation in the film industry has also been driven by a growing emphasis on inclusion and diversity. There is persistent underrepresentation of marginalized groups, including people of colour, women, and LGBTQ+ individuals, in both on-screen representation and behind-the-scenes roles (Damico, 2022; Garza, 2023). Advocacy for diverse storytelling and diverse hiring

practices has led to initiatives aimed at increasing representation and promoting inclusivity in the film sector (Damico, 2022). Film festivals, such as the Durban International Film Festival inclusion initiatives, have also played a role in championing underrepresented voices and fostering diverse narratives (Cheyroux, 2022).

In recent years, sustainability and environmental concerns have become integral to the film industry's transformation. Studies have focused on green filmmaking initiatives aimed at reducing the industry's carbon footprint and adopting eco-friendly production practices (KZN Film, n.d). Organizations like the Green Production Guide and the Producers Guild of America's Green Production Guide have provided guidelines and resources to promote environmentally responsible filmmaking (Vaughan, 2022). The implementation of sustainable practices in film production has become a growing priority for industry stakeholders and policymakers (Vaughan, 2022). As global trends continue to expand, the South African market must align itself with these developments (KZN Film, n.d).

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly impacted the film industry, bringing about unprecedented challenges and transformations. The closure of theatres and the halt of film production disrupted the traditional filmmaking process (Bachman and Hull., 2022.). The pandemic accelerated the shift towards online streaming and digital distribution, leading to changes in audience behaviour and consumption patterns (Oliver. and Lalchev., 2022).

#### 4.10 Policies and Programmes Promoting Women's Empowerment in the Film Industry

To foster gender equality and empower women, the South African government has implemented various policies and programs within the film industry. These initiatives and policies aim to address the historical marginalization of women in this sector and emphasize gender equality in the sector. Beyond policy formulation, government-backed interventions have been introduced as part of broader strategies promoting gender equality within the arts sector. These include funding schemes specifically targeting projects led by women that have been established to ensure equitable access to resources.

*Table 4: Policies promoting Women's Empowerment in the Film Industry*

Name	Overview and key points	Relevance to this study
<b>The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, 1995</b>	The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service was introduced, which set the stage for a series of ground-breaking reforms aimed at empowering women in the film industry and driving a more comprehensive public service transformation (NFVF, 2018).	The representation of women in South African films remains a pressing issue that hinders progress towards gender equality within the film industry. The White Paper highlights the urgent need for increased women empowerment and diversity within this industry. However, progress has been slow and limited, perpetuating a sense of exclusion and a lack of representation for women in film.

<p><b>National Film and Video Foundation Act, 1997</b></p>	<p>The National Film and Video Foundation is a government agency for the promotion and development of the film industry. The objectives of the Foundation are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. to develop and promote the film and video industry.</li> <li>b. to provide and encourage the provision of opportunities for persons, especially from disadvantaged communities.</li> <li>c. to encourage the development and distribution of local film and video products.</li> <li>d. to support the nurturing and development of and access to the film and video industry; and</li> <li>e. in respect of the film and video industry, to address historical imbalances in the infrastructure and distribution of skills and resources.</li> </ol>	<p>The National Film and Video Foundation has had a profound impact on the film sector, specifically in terms of promoting women's empowerment and addressing historical injustices. This legislation, enacted in 1997, aimed to rectify the underrepresentation of women in the film industry and shed light on the marginalized voices. The Act not only sought to empower women by providing them with equal opportunities but also aimed to address the racial and gendered historical imbalances in the infrastructure and distribution of skills and resources in the industry.</p>
<p><b>The White Paper on Affirmative, 1998</b></p>	<p>Provided the framework within which government laws, policies and programmes were to redress past imbalances and to ameliorate the conditions of individuals and groups who have been disadvantaged on the grounds of race, gender, or disability.</p>	<p>Affirmative action policies have shattered traditional barriers, diversifying production teams and fostering an inclusive film industry. However, ongoing efforts are required to address systemic biases and ensure that</p>

		affirmative action policies lead to lasting change within the industry.
<b>Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998 and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, 4 of 2000</b>	<p>These Acts were promulgated; both giving effect on the value of equality which lies at the heart of the Constitution in Section 9 of the Bill of Rights.</p> <p>To actualise this equality within the workplace, a particular emphasis is put on women and people with disabilities as targeted groups.</p>	These acts have facilitated initiatives aimed at addressing discriminatory practices within film production companies. They encourage employers to implement fair hiring practices that prioritize skills and talent over gender biases. In addition, they serve as powerful tools to dismantle barriers and transcend societal norms, creating a more diverse and representative film landscape.
<b>Black Economic Empowerment Act and Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment Acts</b>	These Acts Introduce the economic empowerment of Black-owned companies.	<p>Women are included in the previously disadvantaged groups.</p> <p>Inclusion of Women in Management Positions for companies.</p>
<b>KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission Act No. 3 of 2010</b>	<p>Some of the objectives of KZN Film include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. to provide and encourage the provision of opportunities for persons, especially from disadvantaged communities, to enter and participate in the film industry in the province.</li> </ol>	The KZN Film commission has made notable progress in advancing initiatives aimed at increasing the participation of women and youth in various programs such as the film fund, markets and festivals, incubation, bursaries, and short courses.



	b. to address historical imbalances in the infrastructure and the distribution of skills and resources in the film industry in the province.	
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According to NFVF (2018), Given the nature of the film industry, most if not all of these policies have been implemented in the industry. There is still a lack of measures to address the existing gender imbalance between men and women. Gender equality concerns are prevalent in the South African film industry, despite the country's extensive legal framework and programs. The industry remains unregulated, and no discussions or interventions are taken to ensure equal participation for women.

#### **4.11 Incentive Support in the Film Sector**

##### **4.11.1 Support Initiatives for Filmmakers**

The Human Capital Development (HCD) of the KZN Film Commission is a central Programme that ensures continuing growth in skills in the province in future years. By focusing on job-creating growth and improved quality of public services and efficiency, Human Capital Development represents a vital approach to, and set of instruments for, the Commission and its shareholders in their efforts to tackle poverty and social exclusion (KZN Film Commission, n.d.). The HCD is divided into the following programmes: Schools Programme, External Bursary Programme, Short skills training programmes, Learnership programmes, Proposal Writing & Pitching Support, SMME Incubation Programme, Film Industry Transformation Initiative (FITI) Programme and Schools Programme.

##### **4.11.2 Schools Programme**

The school programme is a basic entry-level programme designed to introduce high school students to the Film and TV industry and the career opportunities available with practical exposure (KZN Film Commission, n.d.).

##### **4.11.2.1 KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission Bursary Programme**

The KZN Film Commission has been awarding bursaries since 2014 through its Bursary programme. The KZNFC bursary considers individuals from previously disadvantaged backgrounds who intend to study at an accredited KwaZulu-Natal tertiary institution that offers an NQF Level 6 or 7 qualification. AFDA and DUT are tertiary institutions which offer Animation, Film and TV at NQF Level 6+ (KZN Film Commission, n.d.).

#### **4.11.2.2 Short Training Programmes**

In 2015, a skills audit was conducted to determine the skills gap in the province. The study observed that the participants were of varied skill levels and required specific programmes to enter the labour market or upskill them in their current placement. The short training programmes were designed as per the upskilling needs as opposed to being generic programmes that cover script writing, technical production, and specialised skills (KZN Film Commission, n.d.).

#### **4.11.2.3 Learnership Programmes**

The KZN Film Commission offers an NQF Level 4 MICT SETA accredited Film and TV Production Operations qualification and the NQF Level 5 MICT SETA accredited Film and TV Production qualification. The Film Commission Level 4 and 5 Film & TV Production learnership programmes are possible through partnerships with the MICT SETA and other stakeholders across the province. The learnerships target learners who wish to enter the film and television industry with no prior competence in the area. Learning towards this qualification allows the learner to experience the various career options in the industry (technical, creative and production) and make an informed choice. Additionally, it allows learners to focus on and gain entry-level competence in a chosen area of specialisation. The learnerships equip learners with a minimum competence in all focus areas and provide an employable level of competence in their choice of focus area (KZN Film Commission, n.d.).

#### **4.11.2.4 Film Industry Transformation Initiative Programme**

The KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission Film Industry Transformation Initiative (FITI) is a 3-year intervention that is aimed at increasing specialised skills in key areas of the industry's value chain that remain as residents in the province and become the core team that services local and international productions. The objective of this program is to develop a holistic 3-year industry transformation initiative that will facilitate the creation of a sustainable film and TV industry in KZN (KZN Film Commission, n.d.).

#### **4.11.2.5 SMME Women and Youth Incubation Programme**

The Incubation programme is in partnership with the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA). Women and Youth-owned SMMEs in the Film and TV Industry are supported through interventions to grow their companies. The objectives of the Incubation Programme are: To develop KZN Film and TV companies that support productions coming into the region and which can compete with services offered in Gauteng and the Western Cape. To ensure sufficient sustainable black-owned companies exist in KZN (KZN Film Commission, n.d.).

#### **4.12. Research design**

Research design can be viewed as an operational framework within which facts are placed so that their meaning comes out clearly (Sileyew, 2019). There are various types of research design –Case Study Design, Causal Design, Cohort Design, Cross-Sectional Design, Descriptive Design, Experimental Design, Exploratory Design, Historical Design, Longitudinal Design, Observational Design, Philosophical Design and Sequential Design. This study used the exploratory design, which is conducted about a research problem when there are few or no earlier studies to refer to. There is no evidence that a study has been conducted on the low participation of women in the KZN film industry. This makes this study more of an exploratory study hence an exploratory research design was used.

#### **4.13 Research approach**

This study used a mixed-method approach that involved collecting quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data. The qualitative method sought to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the population under study. The qualitative method helped the researchers to interpret and better understand the effectiveness of current initiatives put in place by the KwaZulu-Natal Film Industry to empower women in the Film industry and the challenges experienced by participants, as well as what needs to be improved.

Quantitative research focuses on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or to explain a particular phenomenon. Quantitative methods emphasise objective

measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through the online questionnaire.

#### **4.14 Target population**

The population size comprised three groups: the KZN Film Commission, female graduates, and women in the KZN Film industry. The KZN Film Commission responsible for funding, research and development were requested to form part of this study.

The database of KZN Film Commission-funded post-graduate students was obtained from the entity to determine the population of this group. This group comprised graduates with qualifications in production, directorship, and drama.

The Women in Film were approached via the KZN Film industry to form part of this study.

#### **4.15 Sampling**

The study's research objectives and the characteristics of the study determine which people to select. For this study, purposive sampling was utilised for selecting the sample. Purposive sampling is one of the most common sampling strategies in which groups participate according to preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question (Palinkas et al., 2015). The sample size that was targeted was one hundred (100) research participants. However, due to several challenges experienced (refer to the limitation of the study), we only obtained eighty-eight (88) responses.

#### **4.16 Data collection**

Interviews and a survey were used as the research strategies and the interview guide and questionnaire respectively were used as data collection research instruments. The interview guide was used in face-to-face interviews and telephonic interviews, however, most of the interviews were face-to-face.

Face-to-face interviews were preferred because, as argued by Sutton and Austin (2015), they are optimal for collecting data on individuals' perspectives and experiences. Furthermore, they are useful in exploring the respondents' attitudes, motivations, and decision-making and allow the researcher to have of the subject being discussed and less time is wasted. The researchers

interviewed the KZN Film Commission to ascertain how the Commission reached the premise that "female students abandon the film industry post-tertiary education", its role in creating employment opportunities for new tertiary outputs, and its efforts in bridging gender disparities in the industry. Interview method assisted the researchers to better understand the research problem, i.e., why there is an underrepresentation of women in the KZN film industry.

There was also a need to cover a larger number of respondents. This was done by conducting an online survey using a questionnaire as the data collection instrument. An online survey is a systematic gathering of data from the target audience characterized by the invitation of the respondents and the completion of the questionnaire over the World Wide Web (Nayak and Narayan, 2019). There are numerous advantages to using online questionnaires, which include ease of data collection, minimizing the cost for data collection, and increasing response rates (Braun et al., 2021). The online survey questionnaire was circulated to the respondents by the KZN Film Commission.

#### **4.17 Data analysis**

The quantitative data underwent a data cleaning and validation process, whereby all duplicate records and identified errors were removed and all typing errors corrected. To produce the expected outputs, descriptive statistical procedures in form frequencies were used to analyse the data. The frequency tables with corresponding summary charts were produced using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel as data analysis tools.

#### **4.18 Data usage and storage**

Data collected in this study was stored in the Moses Kotane Institute (MKI) repository for safekeeping and future reference. The data was used for the intended purpose of this study. The questionnaire allowed respondents to either share their personal information such as names, surnames and contact details or respond anonymously because of the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), which promoted the protection of personal information processed. The information will not be shared with any third party. The data will be kept for 5 years; thereafter, it will be disposed of by deleting it from the MKI Information Technology Enterprise Environment.

#### **4.19 Reliability and validity**

Validity in research refers to the accuracy and truthfulness of the findings based on the integrity and application of the methods undertaken and the precision with which the findings accurately reflect the data (Noble and Smith, 2015). A valid study should demonstrate what exists, and a valid instrument should measure what it is supposed to measure. Reliability is concerned with the consistency, stability, and repeatability of the employed analytical procedures (Mohajan, 2017). It refers to the ability of a research method to produce consistently the same results over repeated testing periods. A panel of three (3) experts were used to validate the questionnaire through content validity and cognitive interviewing. The Content Validity Index (CVI) that was used in this study is the Item - Content Validity [I-CVI] (Rodriguez et al., 2017).

#### **4.20 Ethical considerations**

Research ethics is of paramount importance when conducting research involving human subjects and minors. Ethical behaviour becomes salient when researchers conduct face-to-face interviews and surveys with vulnerable groups or communities which may be unable to express their emotions during the sessions (Kang and Hwang, 2021). Researchers face several ethical challenges, such as respect for privacy, confidentiality, establishment of honest and open interactions, and avoiding misrepresentations (Weinbaum et al., 2019). Informed consent has been recognised as an integral part of ethics in research conducted in different fields (Kang and Hwang, 2021). Therefore, this study obtained informed consent through the questionnaire. To obtain full consent from the study participants, the subjects were requested to indicate their willingness to participate by clicking "yes" or "no" on the consent form. The informed consent informed the participants what the study was all about and that participation in the study was voluntary. Furthermore, it informed the participants that they could withdraw from participating without any negative consequence on their part. In addition, the participants were informed that confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained. The gatekeeper's permission was obtained before the study was conducted. Finally, ethical clearance was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee and the approval of the proposal, which approved the undertaking of the study.

## **4.21 Study limitations**

### **4.21.1 Gender**

Data collectors faced the challenge of gender identification since Gen X and Z no longer identify as binary (male and female). Most respondents, natural females, were offended by the gender options- male, female and other. They argued that “other” was not inclusive of queer identities and chose not to participate in the study since the research topic spoke to “women” only. The data collectors had anticipated creatives’ sensitivity towards their craft but not the issue of gender identification.

### **4.21.2 Uncertainty on Population Size**

The study could not determine the population size of the target group due to limited data on the number of women in the film industry thus affecting the determination of an appropriate sample size.

### **4.21.3 Relocation of respondents.**

A few respondents stated that the low participation of women in the KZN film industry was due partly to job seekers leaving KZN for job opportunities in Johannesburg and Cape Town. There are not enough TV shows/productions in KZN except for *Uzalo* and *Umkhokha*.

## **5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Consent to participate in this study**

The sample size for this research study was 88 respondents. Approximately 89% of the respondents gave their full consent to participate in the study. Only 11% of the respondents did not give us their concerns to participate in the study hence they were eliminated from partaking in this research study. Consent is one of the most critical ethical considerations when conducting research as it protects both the researcher and the participants.



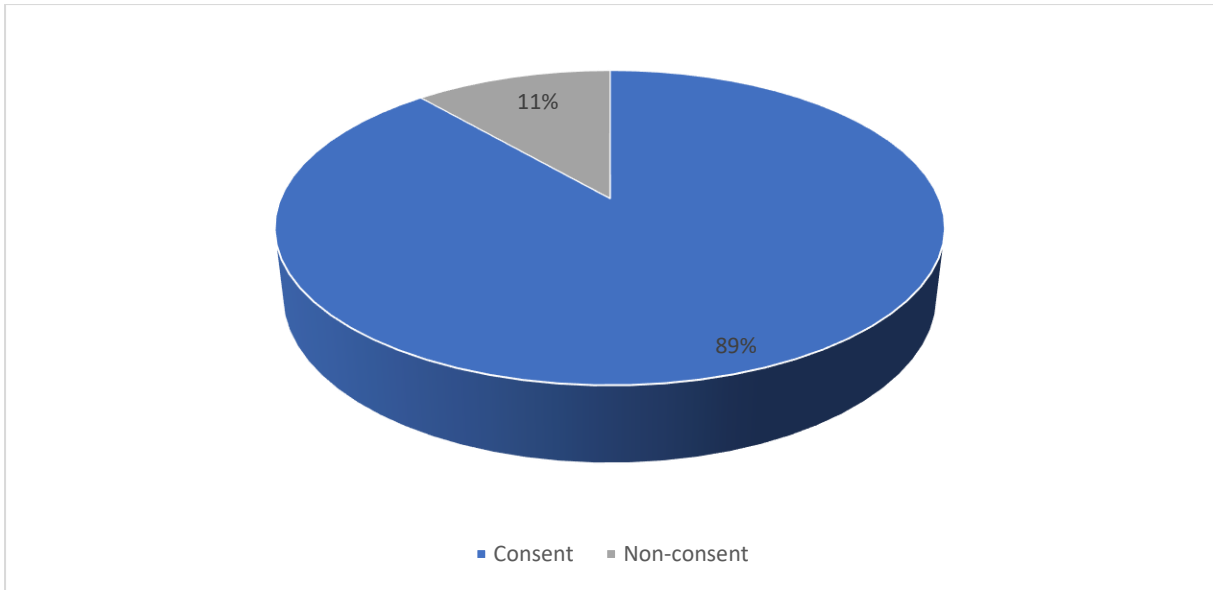


Figure 11: Consent to participate in the study

## 5.2 Categories of the respondents

The research participants were divided into three categories i.e., KZN Film Commission employees, female film graduates and women in film. Female film graduates made up most of the respondents representing by 46% whereas women in film accounted for only 44%. Only 10% of the participants were from the case that ended Film Commission (figure 12).

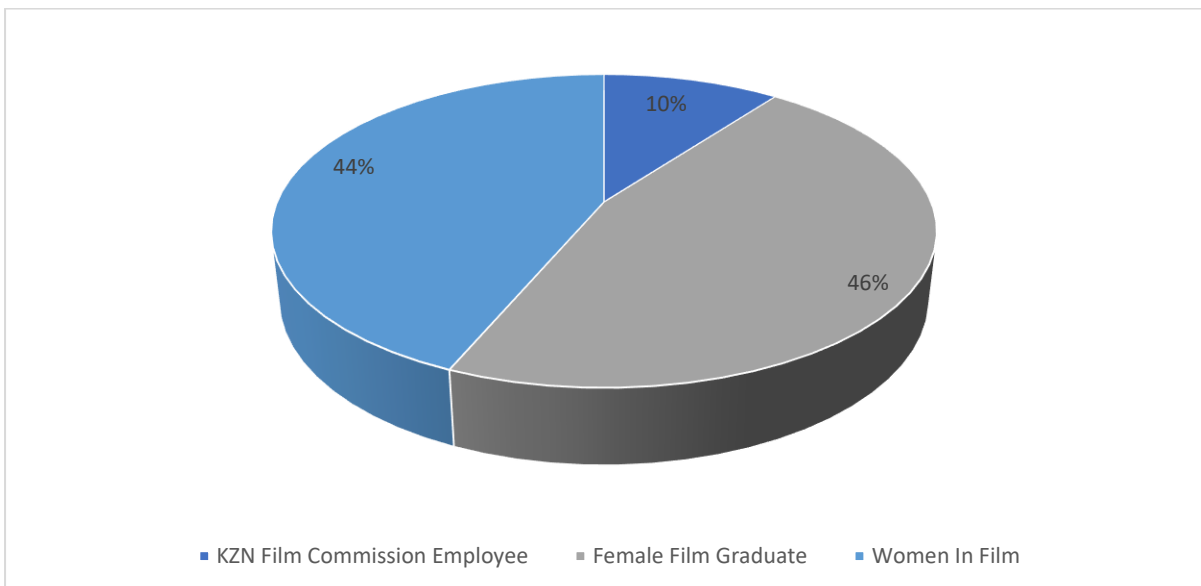


Figure 12: Categories of research participants

### 5.3 Citizenship of the research participants

A considerable proportion (over 94%) of the research participants were South African. Only 6% of the women in the film when non-South African and 13% of the Film Commission employees that participated in this study were also non-South African (figure 13). The low representation of non-South Africans in this study could be attributed to the fact that KZN residents are predominantly South Africans.

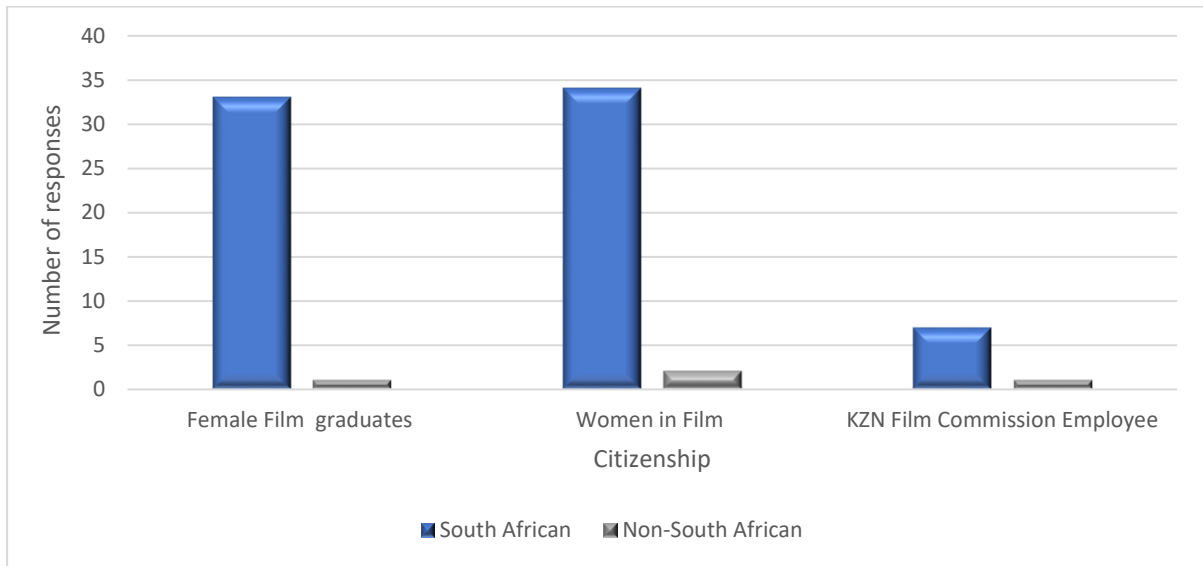


Figure 13: Citizenship of the research respondents

### 5.4 Age of the research participants

A sizable proposition of the female film graduates was between the ages of 18 and 34 years. As expected, most of the women in the film were between the ages of 25 and 54 years old. This category of participants comprised writers, producers, directors, editors etc. These are seasoned individuals who have been in the industry for a substantial number of years. Approximately 58% of women in the film were between the ages of 35 and 44 years. Notably, there was no representation of the participants above the age of 65 for all the categories of the respondents (figure 14).

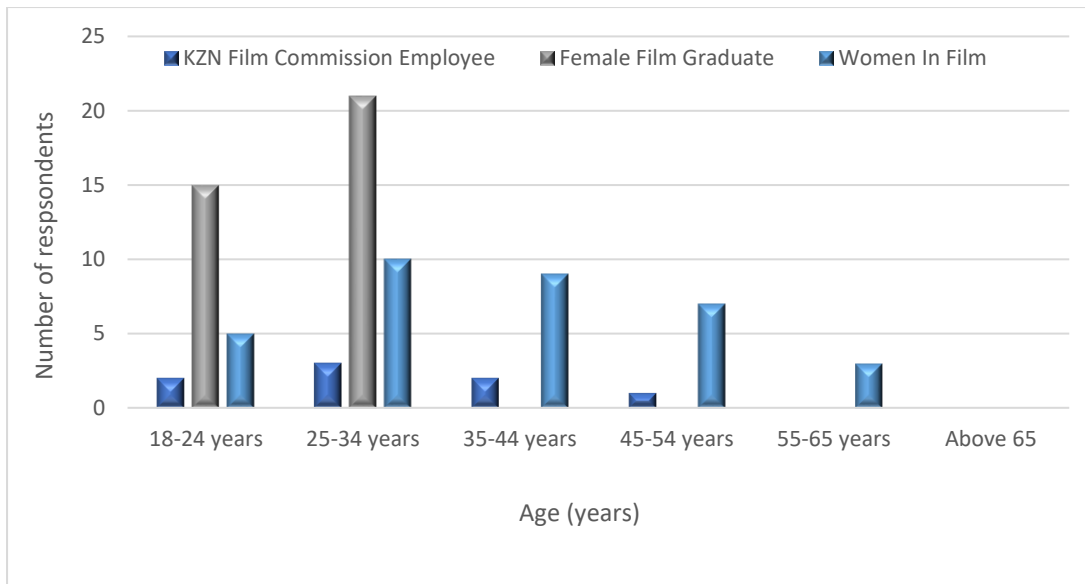


Figure 14: Age of the research respondents in years

### 5.5 Gender and race of the research participants

In terms of the gender of the participants, 63% of the Film Commission employees identified as female whereas only 37% were male (table 5). Due to the nature and objectives of this study, the other category of the respondents were strictly females as depicted in table 5.

Table 5: Gender and race of the research participants

	KZN Film Commission Employee	Female Film Graduate	Women In Film
Male	3	0	0
Female	5	36	34
Other	0	0	0

The KZN Film Commission employees were Black (87%) with only 13% Coloured representation (figure 15). The race distribution of female film graduates was as follows, 81% were black, followed by 8% Indians and 5% Coloured. Whites were represented by only 3% as depicted in figure 15. The race of the women in film was similar to that of female film graduates, i.e., 64% Black, 15% Indian, 9% white and 9% Coloured.

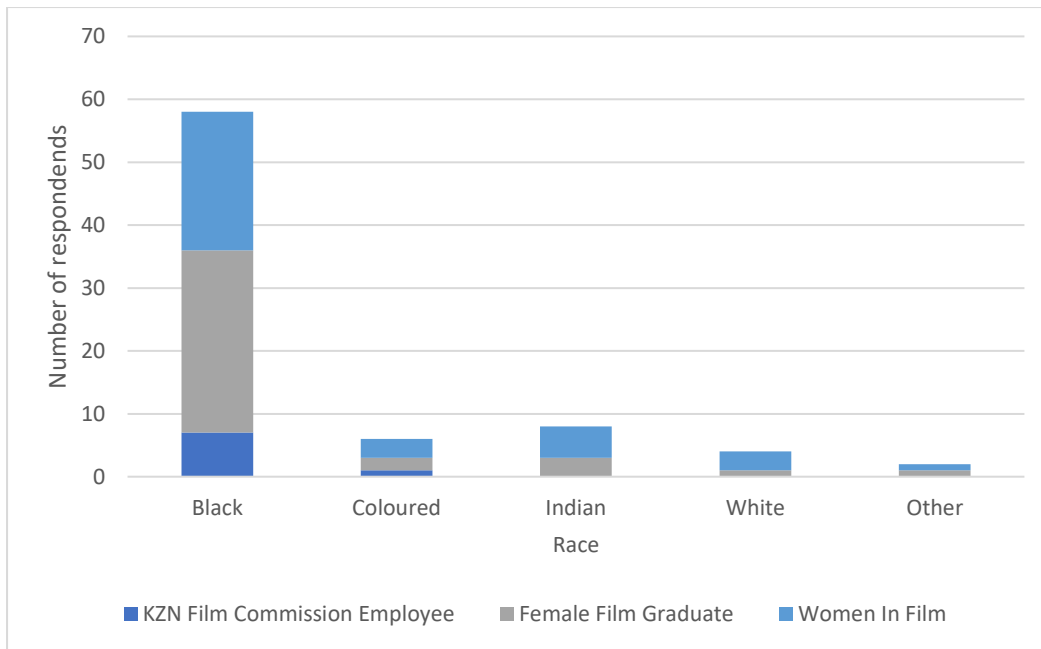


Figure 15: Race of the research participants

## 5.6 District municipalities of the respondents

The following results in Table 6 highlight the location of the respondents in terms of district municipalities. A considerable number of participants were from the eThekweni metro, followed by those from uMgungundlovu and King Cetshwayo district (table 6). These findings could be attributed to the fact that most production houses are based in the eThekweni metro. Moreover, institutions of higher learning that offer film studies and KZN Film Commission are all based in and around the metro.

Table 6: District municipalities of the respondents

	KZN Film Commission Employee	Female Film Graduate	Women In Film
eThekweni	8	26	26
uMgungundlovu	0	8	1
Uthukela	0	0	0
Ugu	0	0	0
Amajuba	0	0	0
King Cetshwayo	0	0	4
Umkhanyakude	0	0	0
Umzinyathi	0	0	1
iLembe	0	1	1
Harry Gwala	0	1	1
Zululand	0	0	0

## **5.7 KZN Film Commission Employees**

The following section of the result will unpack the findings from the Film Commission employees who participated in the study. The subjects were from various departments within the Film Commission including managers, directors, researchers, application officers, PR and Events Specialists and coordinators etc.

### **5.7.1 Proof of an assumption that female students abandon the film industry post-tertiary**

According to the KZN Film Commission majority of female film graduates tend to abandon this industry post-tertiary due to the following reasons:

- Lack of employment opportunities for female film graduate, and thus, they divert to other sectors or industries to secure employment.
- Roadblocks or gatekeeping by industry role players, patriarchal perception of women (women being viewed as inferior), lack of access to quality training and education, low self-esteem, lack of resources and relevant experience, lack of female role models in the film industry.
- Historically, the film industry has been predominantly male dominated, which can create an environment that is not always inclusive or welcoming to female professionals. This gender disparity may create a perception that opportunities are limited for female professionals in the industry, which could lead some female students to choose alternate career paths.

It is worth stating that one of the respondents from the Film Commission was of a different view than that of the majority. They clearly articulated their contrasting view by stating that opportunities in public platforms have always included women, historically disadvantaged communities and people living with disabilities. Furthermore, in their personal experience working in the film industry with Stained Glass, Grapevine Productions and Khanyo Media, women have always been the leading force in the industry. This could be the case with the aforementioned production houses, however, based on the literature and findings of the study there is still room for improvement in terms of addressing gender disparity within the film industry and promotion of inclusion.

### **5.7.2 Gender disparity in the KZN film industry**

KZN Film Commission who has further requested to give their honest opinion regarding gender disparity within the film industry. Notably over 80% of the respondents indicated that there is indeed gender disparity within this industry. This gender disparity could be due to the following:

- Females tend to focus on house duties and pink-collar-type jobs.
- Women must take their positions and change the game; they must not wait to be offered a seat at the table.
- There are less opportunities for women to participate in the film sector.
- Limited or no financial support to support women-owned productions.
- Traditional gender roles and stereotypes in society may influence the perception of certain roles being more suitable for one gender over another. In the context of the KZN film industry, cultural norms and expectations might contribute to a perception that certain positions or roles within the industry are more fitting for men than women, leading to an imbalance in gender representation.

Consistent with the findings of this study, Kangas et al. (2014) highlighted the glaring gender disparities that persist in the film sector. Additionally, a study conducted by the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film in 2022, indicated that women comprised 24% of directors, writers, producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top 250 grossing films, down 1% from 2021.

### **5.7.3 Educational background as a contributing factor to poor absorption of female graduates**

This study sought to address the influence of education and training in the absorption or lack thereof of female graduates. Interestingly, educational background is not a major contributing factor to non-absorption of female graduates in that 62.5% of the Film Commission employees are of the notion that practical experience is more crucial in this industry as compared to having a formal qualification. They further stated that:

- Only in roles like production and office roles and admin women are needed in departments like camera and grips and lighting directing and producing and scriptwriting.
- Most people in the film industry are experienced without industry qualifications.

- There is no substitute for practical experience skills and in-depth knowledge and understanding of the industry.
- In the film industry, practical skills and hands-on experience often hold substantial weight. Employers may prioritize candidates with a strong portfolio of work or demonstrable experience in relevant areas such as filmmaking, production, editing, or other specialized roles. While formal education from a university or a recognized film school can provide a solid theoretical foundation and technical knowledge, practical experience and a strong body of work are equally crucial in this industry.

The continuing gap between theoretical knowledge and practical experience in the areas of education, recruitment and employability of people has become a major concern for educational establishments, employers, and the recruitment industry (Fisher and González, 2020). There is room for both theory and practice, and it appears that the optimum situation is when both co-exist. In agreement with the findings of this study, Fisher and González (2020) reported that there are situations where practical knowledge is of greater importance than theoretical knowledge, for example in the film and creative industry.

#### **5.7.4 Challenges faced by the industry in absorbing new intake from tertiaries**

Several challenges are faced by the industry in terms of the absorption of the new intake from tertiary institute that is according to the Film Commission. These challenges include the following:

- Budget constraints
- Graduates come out of varsity with theoretical knowledge and no practical experience of the industry.
- Lack of internship and coaching opportunities for graduates
- Industry is dominated, and females are mostly side-lined.
- Number of graduates produced vs industry demands (that is tertiary institutions produce a high number of graduates, yet there are limited opportunities available for such graduates).
- Demonstrable skills gained through practical experience can demonstrate a candidate's ability to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world situations. For example, having experience working on film sets, participating in independent film projects, or completing internships or apprenticeships with established professionals can provide valuable insights into the industry's workflows, expectations, and best practices. This

hands-on experience can help candidates develop essential skills in areas such as cinematography, directing, editing, sound design, and production management.

### 5.7.5 KZN Film Commission provisions to absorb more female graduates in the province

It is apparent from the findings of this study that most (62.5%) of Film Commission employees are not aware of the initiatives that have been enacted by the entity to absorb female graduates within the industry (table 7). It is therefore impossible to deduce whether these initiatives have yielded dividends.

Table 6: KZN Film Commission provisions to absorb more female graduates in the province

Provisions made by the Film Commission to absorb more female graduates in the province.		Impact of the initiatives in achieving long-term financial security and growth for graduates
1	<input type="radio"/> Not that I know of	<input type="radio"/> No
2	<input type="radio"/> Yes, through policies	<input type="radio"/> Yes
3	<input type="radio"/> I don't know	<input type="radio"/> I don't know
4	<input type="radio"/> Yes, via quota systems <input type="radio"/> Filmmaker projects only for women	<input type="radio"/> Not entirely as the demand is low in the industry <input type="radio"/> not a lot of work in KZN
5	<input type="radio"/> Not sure	<input type="radio"/> Yes
6	<input type="radio"/> I have no idea	<input type="radio"/> No
7	<input type="radio"/> Not sure	<input type="radio"/> Yes
8	<input type="radio"/> Establishing mentorship programs that connect aspiring female filmmakers with experienced professionals can provide valuable guidance and support for career development.	<input type="radio"/> Some initiatives in the film industry have been successful in providing opportunities for professional development, networking, and skill enhancement, which can contribute to the long-term growth of graduates. These initiatives may include mentorship programs, training workshops, networking events, and funding opportunities. By providing access to resources, knowledge, and networks, these initiatives can help graduates build sustainable careers and access more significant opportunities within the industry.

### 5.7.6 Current labour market demands for new entries into the industry

Fifty per cent (50%) of the respondents were clueless about the current labour market demands for new entries within the film industry. This is depicted in Table 8 below. The film Commission must maintain a close watch not only on the developments in the film industry but of the current labour market demands that influence the success and trends of this industry.



In the ever-evolving film industry, emerging professionals are confronted with a dynamic labour market shaped by an array of trends and technological advancements (Smith, 2022). A pivotal force driving change is the escalating demand for digital content creation. This imperative stems from the industry's profound shift toward online platforms and streaming services, necessitating a workforce skilled in digital storytelling, visual effects, and immersive technologies (Jones & Brown, 2021). Concurrently, the proliferation of virtual production techniques, harnessing technologies like LED walls and real-time rendering, has ushered in a demand for professionals well-versed in these cutting-edge methodologies (Johnson et al., 2020). Aspiring entrants must navigate this landscape with an acute awareness of the industry's digital transformation, positioning themselves as adaptable creators fluent in the language of the contemporary cinematic experience.

As technological frontiers expand, another noteworthy trend shaping the film industry is the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into various facets of filmmaking (White & Lee, 2023). From script analysis to post-production optimisation, AI applications have become integral to enhancing efficiency and creativity (Brown & Davis, 2022). This intersection of AI and film production creates a demand for individuals who can seamlessly navigate and leverage these technologies (Miller et al., 2021). Consequently, aspiring professionals are encouraged to develop a nuanced understanding of AI's role in the cinematic realm, establishing a competitive edge as they venture into an industry that continues to embrace and integrate innovative technological solutions.

Table 7: Current labour market demands for new entries into the industry

<i>Labour market demands for new entries</i>
I have no idea
I don't know
I don't know
Fresh ideas, different leadership styles, need for more collaboration, need for young black voices, need for diversity
I don't know
Netflix
New talent
With the rise of online streaming platforms and the increasing demand for digital content, there has been a growing need for professionals skilled in digital content creation, including video production, editing, and digital marketing.

## 5.8 Female Film Graduates

### 5.8.1 Graduate employed in the Film industry

It is disappointing to note that most of the female film graduates are not employed within this industry. This is highlighted in Figure 16, where 72% of the graduates indicated that they are employed in other sectors and industries outside the film industry. Only 28% of the participants are currently employed within the film sector. This is due to limited job opportunities in the film industry, lack of practical experience and lack of internship programs.

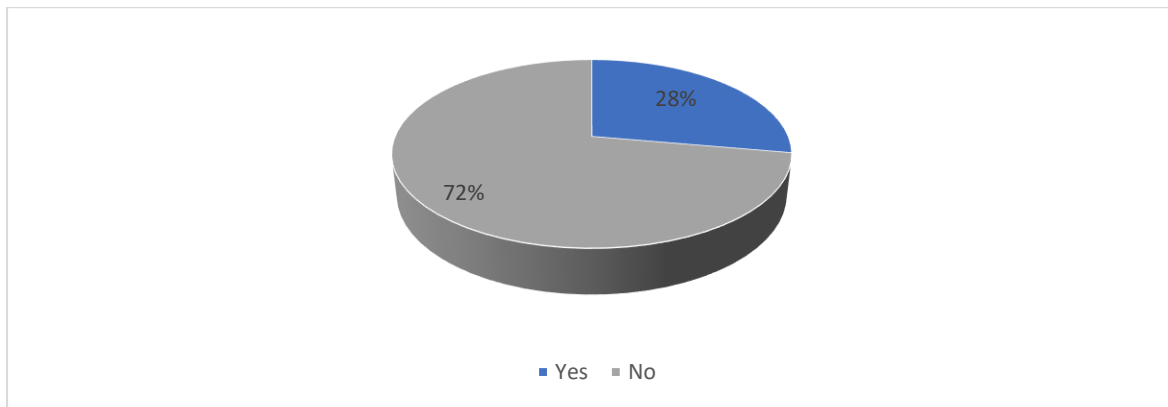


Figure 16: Graduate employed in the Film industry

### 5.8.2 Number of years it took to be employed in the film sector

Like Figure 16 above, 69% of the respondents indicated that they were not employed within the film industry. Approximately 25% Of the graduates indicated that it took them one to three years to secure employment opportunities within the film industry. Six per cent (6%) further asserted that it took them four to six years to secure employment. These findings indicate the daunting challenge faced by not only film graduates in securing employment opportunities but by 99% of the province's graduates. Similarly, Stats SA (2023) reported that the graduate unemployment rate during the first quarter of 2023 was at 10,6%.

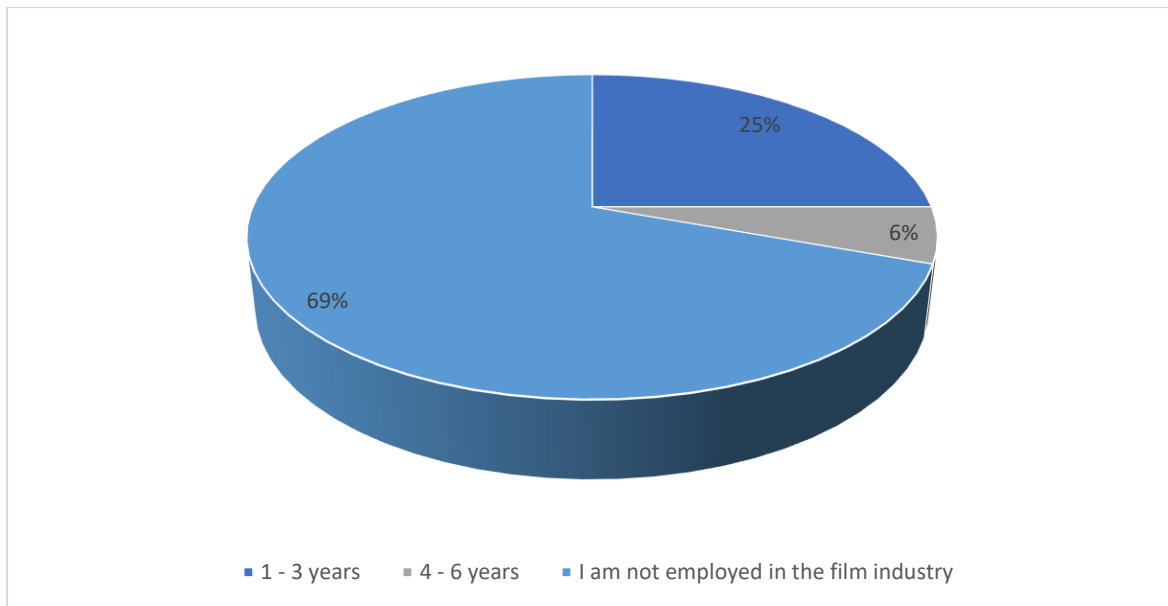


Figure 17: Number of years it took to be employed in the film sector

### 5.8.3 Current occupation of the graduates

It is disheartening to note that only 8 out of 36 (22.2%) graduates are currently employed in the film industry as a production intern, lighting, data specialist, theatre actress, journalist, liaison officers, line producers, and actresses (table 9). A staggering 25% of the graduates have opted to further their studies due to the unavailability of internship and employment opportunities within the industry. Additionally, 19.4% of the graduates affirmed that they are unemployed, whereas 33.4% are employed in other industries outside the film sector, i.e., retail financial industry, education, communications, banking, and public sector.

Table 8: Current occupation of the graduates

Current Occupation	If you are not employed in the film industry, which industry are you employed in?
Production intern	In television
Lighting best girl	In the industry- lighting
Data Specialist	VOD, distribution, localization
Customer service representative	Financial industry
Unemployed	N/A
Student	Motion Picture student at AFDA Durban
Student	Student
Cashier	Retail
Theatre actress	Actress
Unemployed	N/A

Marketing Student because I've been struggling to find a job and I'm not being accepted into writing programmes.	Student
Researcher	Education
Unemployed	Not employed. Freelance. There are no "employers" in the film industry
Student (Honours)	N/A
Journalist	Journalism
Liaison officer	Liaison officer
Unemployed	N/A
Unemployed	Unemployed
Call centre operator	Communication
Postgraduate student	education
Intern	N/A
Postgraduate	Student
Postgraduate student	N/A
Researcher	N/A
Research Analyst	Banking sector
PhD Candidate	N/A
Researcher	Education
Intern	Environmental affairs
Marketing analyst	Retail
Postgraduate	N/A
Unemployed	Unemployed
Line producer	Line producer
Unemployed	N/A
Cashier	Retail
Actress	Actress
Teacher	Education

#### 5.8.4 Major challenges that have prevented a long-term career pursuit in the film industry

Numerous challenges graduates face that prevents them from pursuing a long-term career in the film industry (figure 18). These challenges include limited job opportunities, followed by a lack of connections, financial barriers, male-dominated industry networks, gender stereotypes, and sexual harassment. Consistent with the findings of this study, Raats et al. (2018) reported that financial barriers limit the diversity of voices and perspectives in the industry and hinder the realization of unique and innovative stories. Other scholars observe that financial barriers often disproportionately affect female filmmakers, who face unjust criticism more frequently than men when they are given key positions (Lee and Raesch, 2015; Wing-Fai et al., 2015; Teixeira et al., 2021).

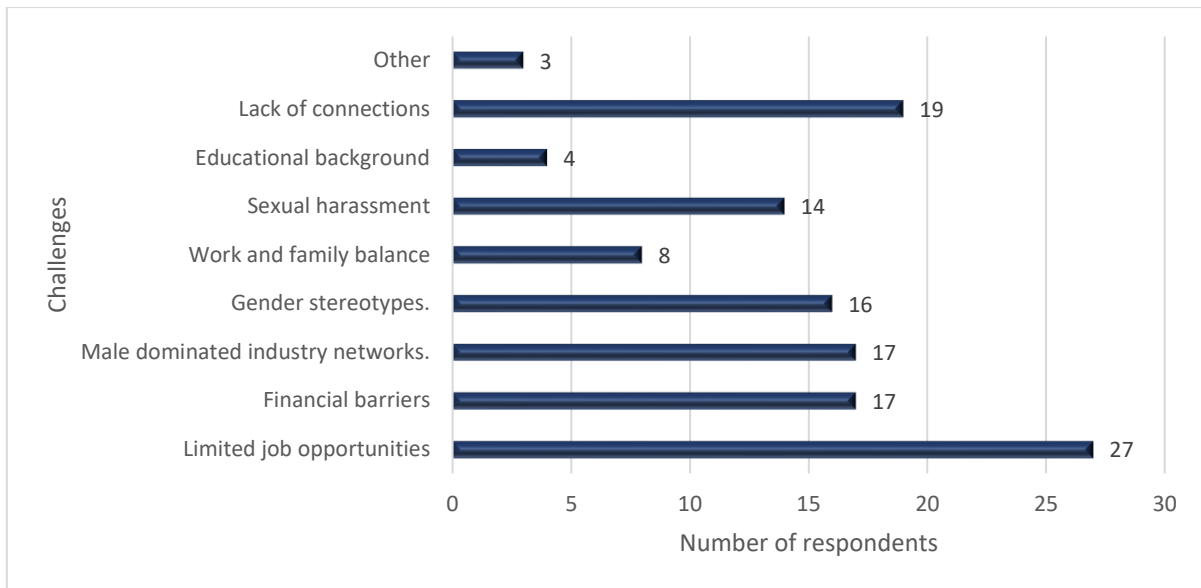


Figure 18: Major challenges that have prevented a long-term career pursuit in the film industry

### 5.8.5 Impact of the challenges in pursuing a long-term career in the film industry

It is apparent from Figure 19 that the challenges experienced by graduates have prevented them from pursuing a long-term career in the film industry. This was confirmed by 67% of the respondents who indicated that they are demoralized and demotivated to even seek employment within the film sector. Only 33% of the respondents indicated that they are still hopeful that they will be able to overcome the challenges (figure 18) and finally secure permanent employment within the film industry. These findings emphasize an urgent need for developmental initiatives aimed at assisting graduates with training, mentorship, coaching, and industry experience.

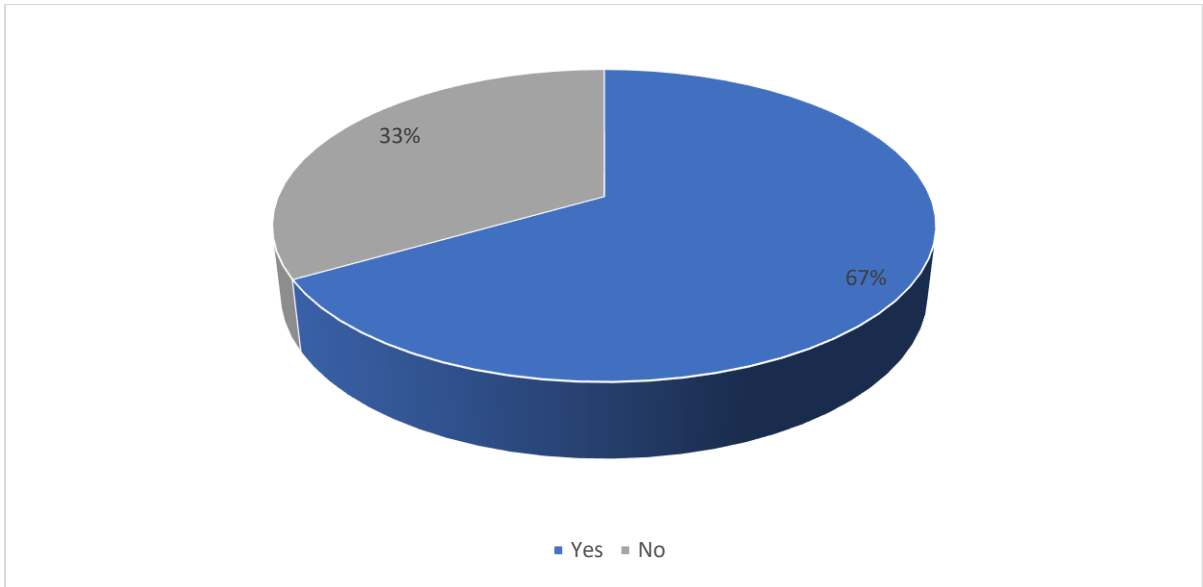


Figure 19: Impact of the challenges in pursuing a long-term career in the film industry

### 5.8.6 Transformation within the industry to absorb new female graduates

Figure 20 indicates that there has been no significant transformation within the film sector to promote women's participation or absorption of female graduates. This was asserted by 44% of the respondents. Furthermore, only 31% confirmed that there has been some sort of transformation (figure 20). Similarly, a report by SNFVF (2015) highlighted that there was a general concern about black employees being placed in lower-level jobs within the film industry. The stagnant transformation of the industry has also been noted as a significant obstacle, especially in the more established provincial film industries, where the involvement and inclusion of women and Black individuals have been viewed as a significant challenge.

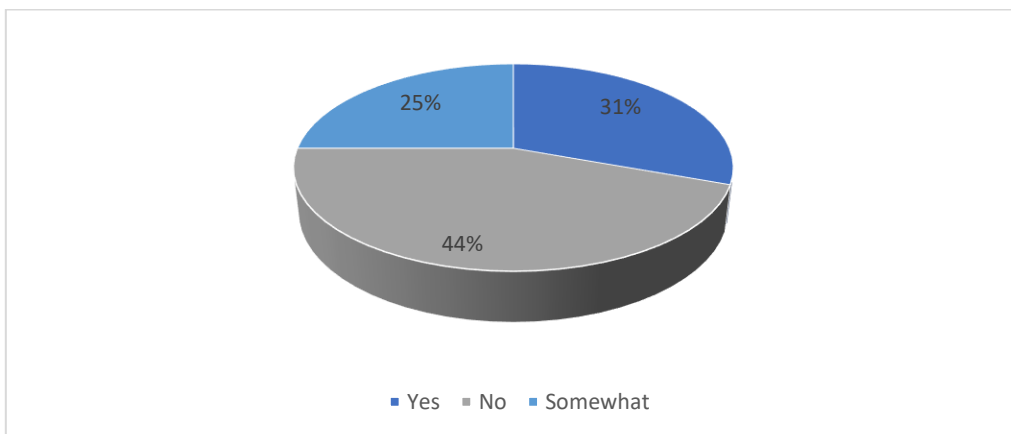


Figure 20: Transformation within the industry to absorb new female graduates

### 5.8.7 Awareness of KZN Film Commission's development and funding initiatives

It is encouraging to note that 28 (77.7%) of the graduates are aware of the Film Commission’s development and funding initiatives (figure 21). However, only a handful (19.4%) of the respondents have benefited from these initiatives, mainly through the bursary programmes. The Film Commission must publicize their development and funding initiatives in all the public platforms to ensure that they are easily accessible to students and the general society.

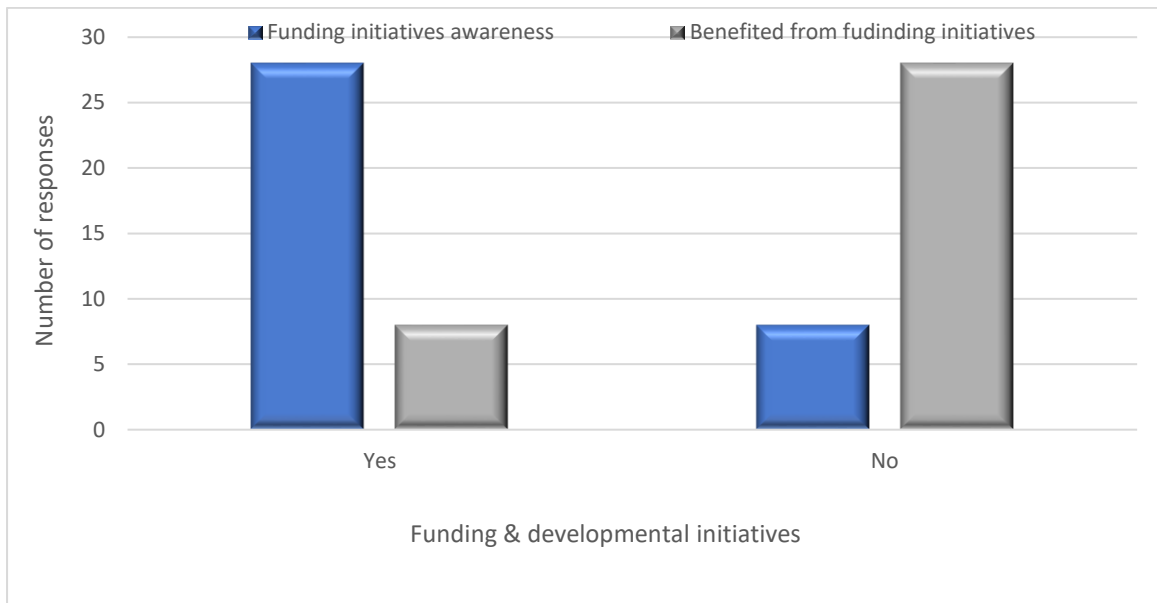


Figure 21: Awareness of KZN Film Commission's development and funding initiatives

### 5.8.8 Necessities to pursue a long – term career in the KZN Film industry

Graduates were further asked to indicate what they need to pursue a long-term career in the film industry. Their requirements are summarised in Table 10 below.

Table 9: Necessities to pursue a long – term career in the KZN Film industry

#### Necessities to pursue a long–term career in the KZN Film industry

- Connections! “Personally, entered this industry with pure passion and drive for storytelling. I've come to realize that I had under-researched the practicalities of getting a job; I thought it was as easy as applying since I am qualified and competent; however, this is not the case. The people who get the jobs in many instances are the people who are related or connected to the key players of the industry no matter how blunt their skills might be because it is not about competency; it's about who you know and what you might be willing to do”.

<p>I went to a practical institution, and despite the 5 A-rated films that I have produced, I'm still rated inexperienced when applying for jobs, and this is everywhere, which echoes the non-recognition of one's qualification.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mostly experience, hard work and then a qualification can help get in through an internship or something like that.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Connections.</li> </ul> <p>“Everyone is so focused on the main top jobs e.g. Not all graduates are interested in that. So many technical skills are left out in the curriculum of schools, and you only find out once in the industry. Broadcasting facilities, more studios artists can rent because podcasts are taking over the VOD platform.”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Finish off my Work Integrated Learning (WIL) for me to graduate and obtain my qualification.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Industry-related work experience that will equip me with enough knowledge &amp; skills so that I can be employable.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Skills, Knowledge &amp; Good connections</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Financial support</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ For men in the industry not to ask for sex in exchange for roles</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ More experience and more opportunities.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Receive a training program/internship, particularly in scriptwriting or the preproduction stage. “I applied for the scriptwriting training offered by KZN Film Commission this year and a guy called to ask for my location since I forgot to include it on my CV, I told him I live in a rural area called Tafelkop on the outskirts of Pinetown and I hoped to be called in the following weeks but was not. I have been applying for jobs and training programs but no luck with employment and absorption in the film industry. There are times when I regret studying Film and wish I chose a generic career because my diploma is gathering dust, and I am losing hope”.</li> </ul> <p>Hopefully, through this research, meaningful data will be collected, and solutions will be strategized and implemented to support film graduates.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Pursue a career in the KZN (KwaZulu-Natal) film industry, you will need a combination of education, skills, networking, and determination.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Industry transformation. More opportunities for female crew members, from production down to the cleaners. No "employee" benefits, people can't even buy houses let alone <b>medical</b> aid. The industry isn't taking care of the artist. They live and die poor, yet they are glorified celebrities.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In the KZN film industry I would like to pursue acting but I also want to work behind the scenes. “For example, I want to write stories, as a writer my dream is to tell stories of black women but not the stereotypical kind of stories. As black women, we are not always strong but can be fragile and should be treated that way. In the KZN film industry, my dream is to pursue acting and writing as well, maybe one day direct my own story.”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Adequate work experience to pursue a career in the KZN Film industry.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ For the exploitation of women in the film industry to end and for the perpetrators to be brought to book.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ An opportunity to be in a professional set and be able to learn more and experience everything with people who already know since I just know the basics of film.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Openings for higher certificate graduate holders within the film industry as assistants on production as a start.</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A strong educational background in film, media studies, or a related field is crucial. Obtaining a degree or diploma from a recognised institution equips you with the necessary theoretical knowledge and practical skills required in the film industry. It provides a foundation for understanding the intricacies of filmmaking, including production, direction, screenwriting, and other technical aspects.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ To pursue a career in the KZN film industry, it's essential to have a strong educational background in film production or related fields. Additionally, networking within the industry is crucial, and gaining practical experience through internships or volunteer work is highly beneficial.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Pursuing a career in the KZN film industry requires a strong educational foundation in film production or related fields. Networking and practical experience gained through internships or volunteer work are also crucial for understanding the industry dynamics</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In the pursuit of a career in the KZN film industry, having a strong creative vision and the ability to adapt to challenges are crucial. Building a strong network and understanding the local culture and stories can also provide an edge in creating relatable content.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ To pursue a career in the KZN film industry, having a strong educational background in film and gaining practical experience through internships or volunteer work is crucial. Developing resilience to handle industry challenges and continuously updating skills and knowledge are also important</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Pursuing a career in the KZN film industry requires a strong educational foundation in film production and a willingness to continuously update skills and knowledge. Gaining practical experience through internships and building a strong network within the industry is also essential.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Building a strong portfolio showcasing your technical skills and creative vision is crucial for starting a career in the KZN film industry. Networking with industry professionals and gaining practical experience through internships or entry-level positions can provide valuable exposure and opportunities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Having a strong passion for storytelling combined with technical expertise is essential for pursuing a career in the KZN film industry. Continuous learning and keeping up to date with the latest industry trends and technological advancements are also critical for long-term success.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ To succeed in the KZN film industry, having a strong work ethic, attention to detail, and a willingness to collaborate with diverse teams are crucial. A comprehensive understanding of the production process, combined with the ability to adapt to changing industry demands, is also essential</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A strong foundation in both theoretical knowledge and practical skills is essential for entering the KZN film industry. Developing a unique artistic voice and continuously honing one's craft through practice and experimentation can help distinguish you in the competitive industry landscape</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A combination of technical skills, creative vision, and a strong understanding of storytelling is essential for establishing a successful career in the KZN film industry. Building a strong network of industry connections and mentors can also provide invaluable guidance and support</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In the KZN film industry, having a strong understanding of local culture and a passion for storytelling is essential. Alongside this, networking with industry professionals and gaining hands-on experience through internships or independent projects can significantly contribute to building a successful career</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A comprehensive understanding of various aspects of film production, such as cinematography, editing, and screenwriting, is crucial for a successful career in the</li> </ul>

KZN film industry. Adapting to the evolving technological landscape and being open to continuous learning is also vital for staying relevant in the industry.
○ For me my degree and network of people have helped elevate me to the next level.
○ Support and employment opportunities
○ Connections and an agent that will assist me to get jobs
○ More job opportunities and internship
○ Connection, and job opportunities in the industry.

### 5.8.9 Strategies and interventions to promote women's participation in the KZN film industry

The proposed strategies and interventions to promote women's participation in the KZN film industry include funding for the training and development of women in film (33), creating more internships and apprenticeships for female graduates (29), ensuring more visibility and recognition for women in film (26), and combating gender stereotypes and sexism (22). These strategies have been proposed by film graduates based on their experience and the challenges they have experienced in entering the industry (figure 22). The results are consistent with the World Bank (2020) report that asserted that providing female graduates with access to education and training opportunities can help them gain the skills and experience necessary for success in the film industry. This support should include scholarships, workshops, and training programs specifically designed for women.

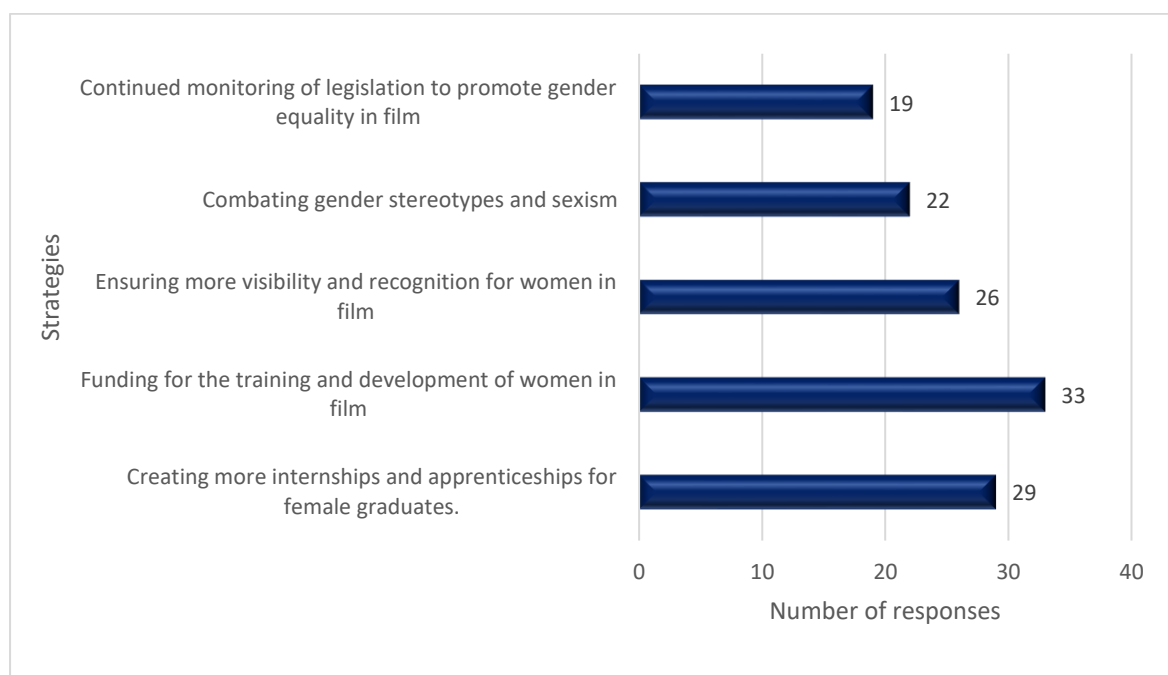


Figure 22: Strategies and interventions to promote women's participation in the KZN film industry

## 5.9 Women in Film

### 5.9.1 Occupation of the women in film that participated in this study

Most of the women in film that participated in the study were actresses (9) followed by producers (5) directors (3), editors (2), writers (2) etc. (figure 23). Interestingly, some of the women indicated that they play different roles depending on the nature of the production, meaning they occupy more than one position, e.g., 8.8% of the women indicated that they are producers, writers, and directors, whereas one of the participants indicated that they are a producer, writer, director, editor, and enrolled as a film student. Such revelations are encouraging as they highlight women's fortitude, passion, desire, and appetite towards advancing in the film sector. In support of the above results, research shows that there is an underrepresentation of women as directors, producers, scriptwriters, and cinematographers (Jones, 2019; Sanchez, 2019; Yang et al., 2020). Loist and Prommer (2019) reported that, between 2009-2013, women solely directed 22% of the films, while no women were involved at all in 75% of the films. Moreover, Liddy (2020) showed that only 3% of women across the globe directed theatrical screening films, contending that there has been a percentage decline of women in all creative roles, some tripping below 30% in countries such as Australia, Germany, Portugal, New Zealand, USA, and Poland.

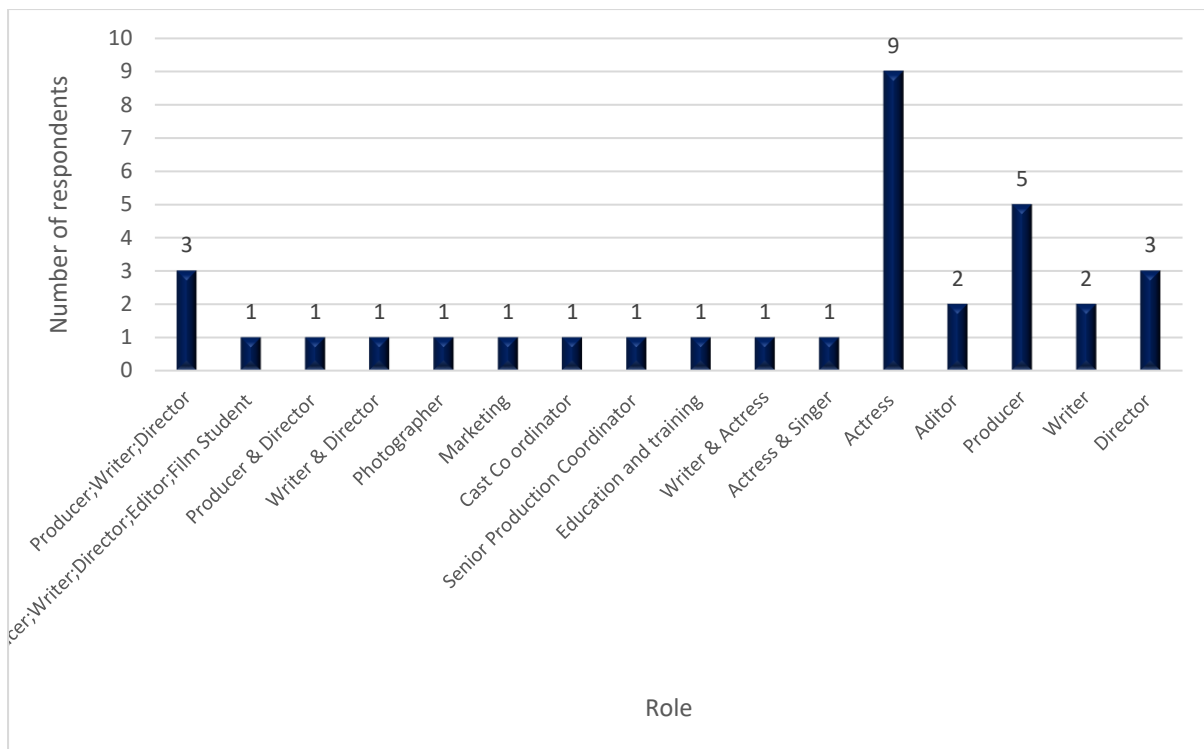


Figure 23: Occupation of the women in film that participated in this study

### 5.9.2 Mode of securing or landing current position

It can be extrapolated from the findings of this study that the most effective way to secure employment within the film industry is through networking (28%), word of mouth (21%) interviews (18%) and connections (15%). The least effective method according to the respondents is volunteering (6%) as depicted in Figure 24. These results are similar to the report by NFVF (2022) that revealed that the film industry does not advertise positions but instead relies on word of mouth to attract employees, so in essence, if you do not know anyone or have any connections within the industry, chances of getting employed are limited. The report further alluded that connections, referrals and networks are currently the most popular mode of finding work opportunities, outstripping that of project advertising. While this method is regarded as the most efficient and effective, there are concerns that it sets limits on transformation, for example, new entrants who are black, young, women and people living with disabilities often find it difficult to enter the industry as they lack the support of viable networks (NFVF, 2022).

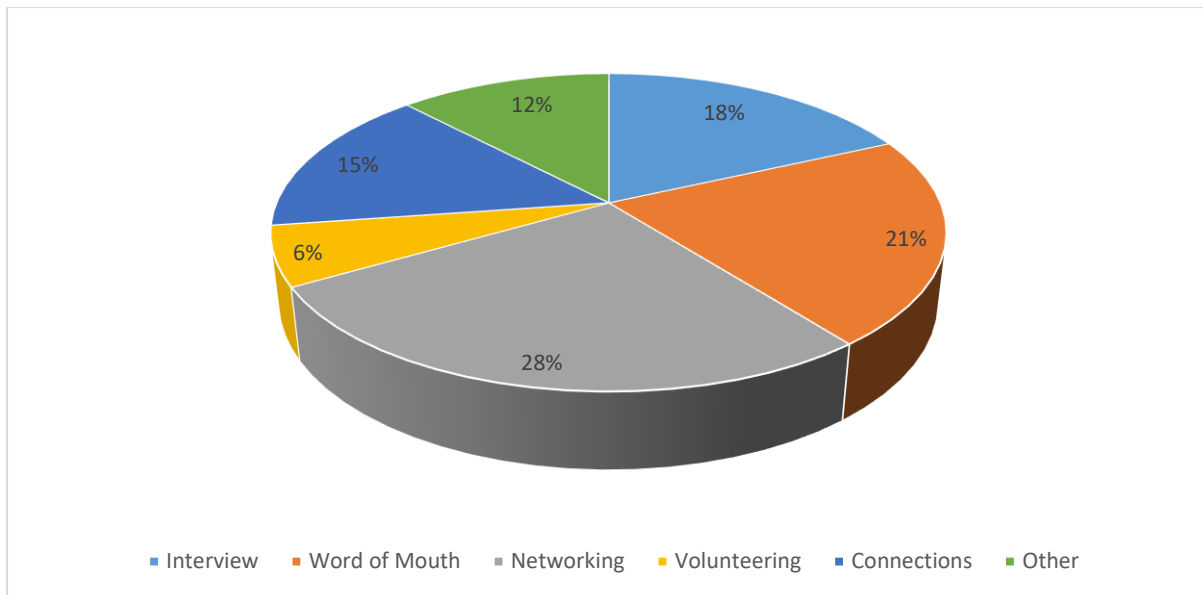


Figure 24: Mode of securing or landing current position

### 5.9.3 Causes of Gender disparity in the film industry

Women further requested to pinpoint the causes of gender disparity within the film industry. It is no surprise that 95% of women are of the view that there's immeasurable gender disparity in the film industry. The section below highlights some of their views regarding the causes of gender disparity.

- Funders have a perception that men can do better than women, moreover, their industry is political.
- Gatekeeping by those that have financial muscle and connections.
- Men mainly occupy strategic and managerial positions.
- Patriarchal tendencies and negligence.
- If a male and a female (with similar experience and credentials) both apply for the same job in the film industry, it is most likely that the male would get the job. It could be because women are viewed as incompetent compared to men, that they can't do it better. Women are compelled to work twice as hard to be recognised. recognized.
- It is no brainer that there's gender disparity in the film industry, even the statistics indicate this at a local and international level.
- This industry has been dominated by males for a long time, so the transition is not easy to accept.
- Women are often paid significantly less than their male counterparts.

- The industry has traditionally been run by white males, as a woman coming into the industry you are discriminated against. Your views are not taken into consideration. Moreover, there is a preference for younger and more beautiful women in the industry.
- Women have faced barriers in accessing opportunities and resources needed to succeed in the industry, including funding, mentorship, and networking. Instances of discrimination, harassment, and a toxic work environment have deterred women from pursuing careers in film.
- Women are severely disadvantaged in the film industry and are not offered the same opportunities as males.
- Due to the stereotypes, women are deemed to be individuals who cannot balance their work and house life.
- South Africa is a country with the highest inequality; therefore, patriarchy is a significant factor.
- Lack of mentorship and support in the industry
- Women are treated as inferior and depicted as sexual objects.
- The reason could be that men are more flexible about working long hours, whereas women have more responsibilities e.g. taking care of households, and kids while also trying to have a healthy work-life balance.
- Women are treated unfairly in this industry.
- Women are not adequately supported nor encouraged to participate in the film industry.
- "Historically, the voice in the film industry has been typically white male. This would explain the nature of the content, the stories, the characters, and the style of many films that we have seen over the past hundred years. This has resulted in gender disparity. But there certainly have been changes and transformation is happening, at a slow rate. More female producers are aware of the disparity and would like to be part of the change by ensuring more females are set behind the scenes and in the pre and postproduction process.
- In the film industry it is not so much what you know, it is more about who you know in the industry (connections).
- Women must be encouraged to acquire technical skills that are necessary in sets, such as lighting, editing, cinematography, animations, etc. These positions are frequently occupied by males.

It is clear from the elaborate views of women in film that the Film Commission in KwaZulu Natal have a mammoth task ahead of them to promote transformation, diversity, and equality.

Even though 5% of the respondents indicated that there used to be a greater gender disparity, the gap appears to be closing. However, the rate of transformation is still slow and requires deliberate strategies that will address the marginalization, exploitation, and discrimination of women.

#### 5.9.4 Perception of men being afforded better opportunities than women in the film industry

A staggering 61% of the participants indicated that men are favoured and offered better opportunities in the film industry as compared to females. Moreover, 21% pinpointed that this is somewhat a status quo in the industry. Only 15% of the respondents believed that equal opportunities are offered to both sexes (Figure 25). These findings are shared by NFVF (2022), who reported that in South Africa, women were less likely to break into senior roles that impact decision-making compared to their male counterparts.

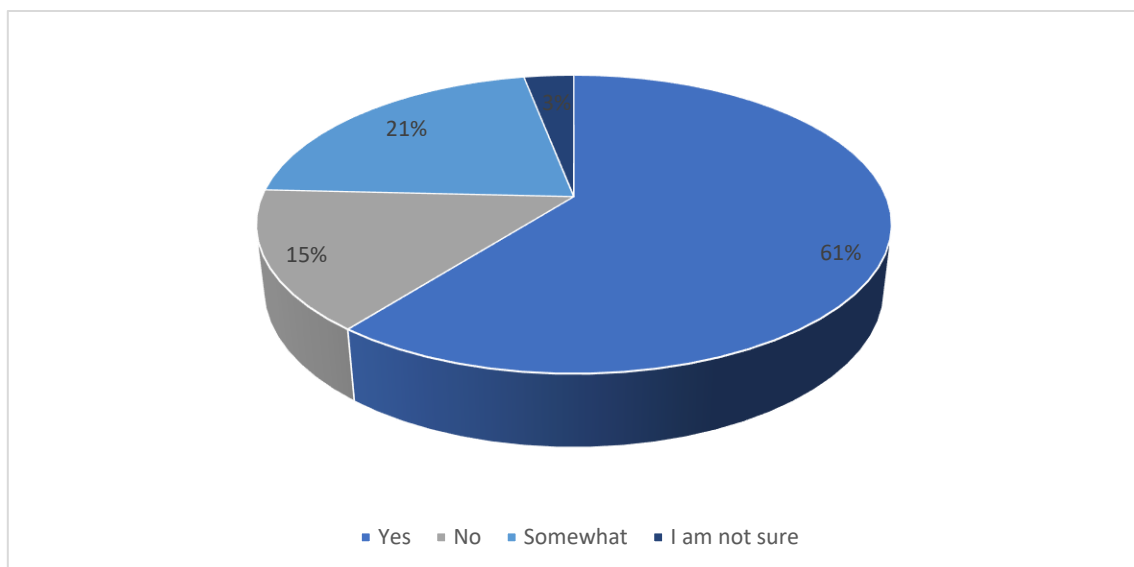


Figure 25: Perception of men being afforded better opportunities than women in the film industry

#### 5.9.5 Personal experience with Gender bias in the workplace

Most of the women who participated in the study indicated that they have not been victims of gender discrimination in their workplace (58%). However, it is worth noting that 42% have been victims of gender bias (figure 26). This section unpacks in detail how the respondents have been victims of gender bias:

- In more productions as 1st AD women and most crew being male it's always challenging.

- Loss of opportunities due to being female.
- Being patronized by older white men, and being asked what a woman of my age is doing in the film industry. This happened in SA as well as the UK.
- Being paid significantly less than my male co-writer and cast members.
- Lack of structural resources and male colleagues hogging equipment
- Being viewed as inferior and paying significantly less than males.
- Being harassed and intimidated
- Being overlooked and my views not being taken seriously
- Certainly not now, but when you start in the industry as a woman of colour, you are generally treated as an outsider and inferior.
- Being undermined
- Being asked for sexual favours.
- Being underpaid and only getting freelance work.
- Women's viewpoints and ideas are usually overlooked, and when the same idea is presented by a male, they are supported.

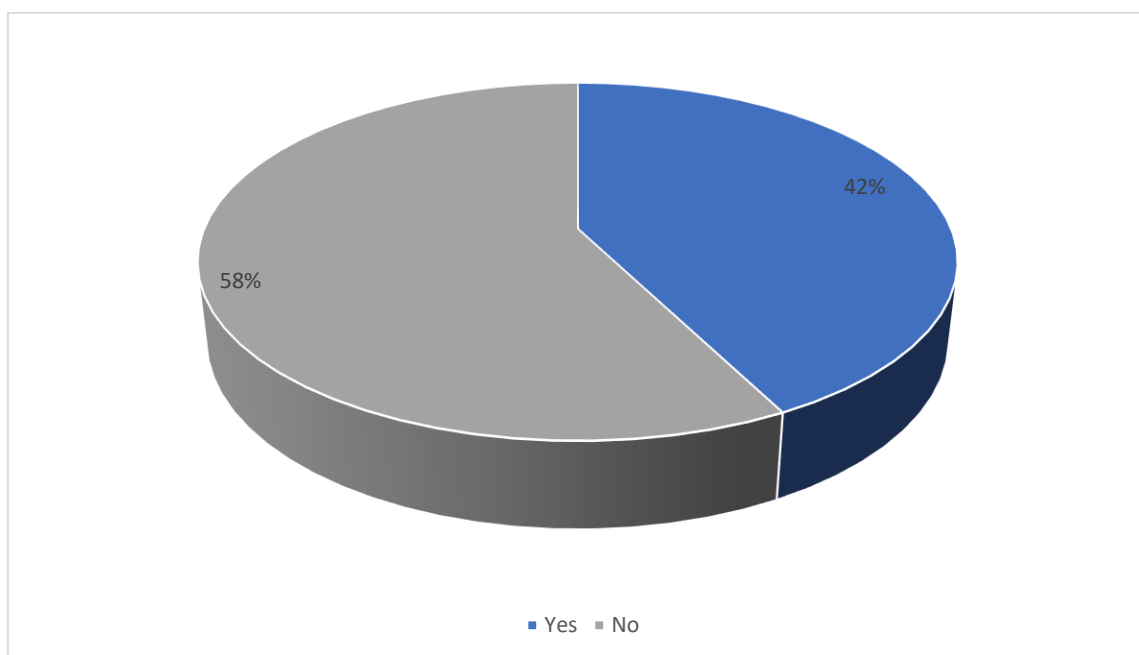


Figure 26: Gender bias at the workplace (film industry)



### 5.9.6 Interventions by KZN Film industry to bridge the gender disparities in the industry

The Film Commission should be commended for the initiatives they have promulgated to support women in the film industry, even though there's still a lot that needs to be done to transform the industry. That was asserted by 54.6% of the participants. Based on the results presented in table 11 below it is apparent that 30.3% of the respondents are unsure of the interventions that have been promulgated by the Film Commission to bridge gender disparity in the industry. Additionally, 15.1% are of the viewpoint that the entity has done nothing to address gender disparity in the industry. These findings necessitate a communication strategy by the Film Commission to publicize their interventions tailored to addressing gender disparity in the film industry. Furthermore, the entity must practice fairness in the selection of the beneficiaries for their interventions.

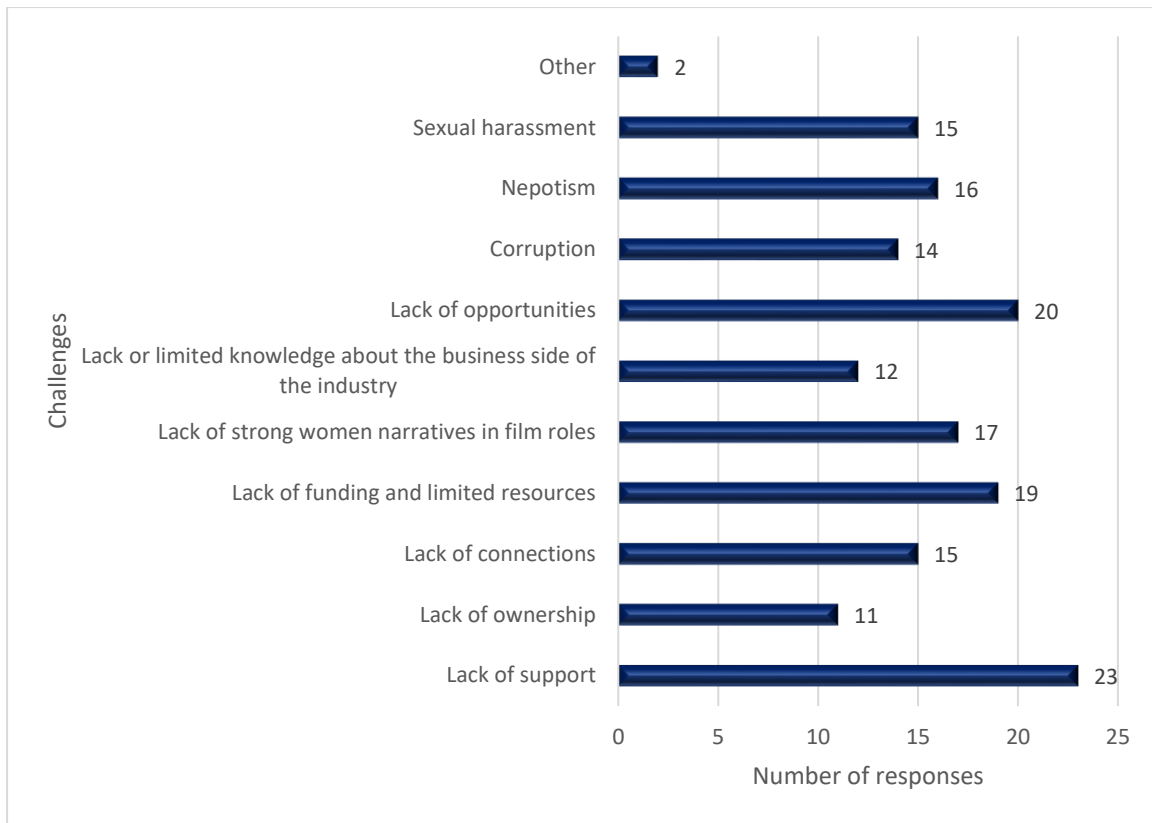
Table 10: Interventions by the KZN Film industry to bridge the gender disparities in the industry

Interventions by the KZN Film Commission
KZN Film is trying but they tend to focus on few individuals (they focus on one Durban female who can't state her name)
There are no gender-specific initiatives
Include all races and genders including gender-neutral communities.
Through conferences and seminars
In the process, giving opportunities specifically to women and prioritizing some projects for women only
They offer opportunities for women to take part in and showcase their talent <b>and</b> offerings
I'm not sure about the KZN Film Commission specifically. However, all parties in KZN are attempting to increase female involvement in the film industry through educational and funding programs.
KZN Film Commission has done a lot, they have created opportunities for women to participate in the film industry.
It has not done much at all, a lot of work still needs to be done.
Nothing
Nothing
Not sure about the answer
The KZN film commission has recently instituted a gender policy that provides an institutional framework to create a safe working environment for women.
They support black women in the industry.
The KZN film industry has created a broad range of opportunities for film and graduate students regardless of their gender, race, etc.
Opportunities should also be afforded to young people
I don't think they have done anything other than funding women
Various initiatives, such as workshops, mentorship programs, and networking events, have been introduced to support and empower women in the film industry
Young females are being trained in the technical department.
Targeted programs for women
I'm not sure

The KZN Film industry provides more opportunities for both males and females. It allows people to express themselves and their talents and skills without any gender disparity.
Nothing
I am not sure
I am not sure
Not sure
The KZN Film industry has grown tremendously and there are various programmes in place, particularly by the KZN Film Commission to bridge the disparities. However, more can be done. For example, the NFVF runs a female short film programme. This programme kickstarted my career, and it can do the same for so many women in KZN.
I am not sure
Not sure
Financial support
Offer support and promote the industry
I am not sure
I am not sure

### 5.9.7 Challenges faced by women in the film industry

Women in the film industry face tremendous challenges ranging from lack of support (23), lack of opportunities (20), lack of funding and limited resources (19), lack of strong women narratives in the film roles (17), nepotism (16), lack of connections (15) and sexual harassment (15) etc. This is depicted in figure 27 below. Women in the film industry face innumerable challenges of gender inequality and discrimination, lack of mentorships, lack of training and education, bias in funding, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, balancing family life and work, amongst other issues that hinder their participation and success in the industry (Starmarski and Son Hing, 2015; NFVF, 2018; Ehrich et al., 2022 and Sandoval, 2022).



*Figure 27: Challenges faced by women in the film industry*

### 5.9.8 Strategies to bridge the gender disparity gap within the film industry

Several strategies have been proposed by women in film to address gender disparity and gender gaps within the film industry (figure 28). These strategies include funding for the training and development of women in film (27), combating gender stereotypes and sexism (21), and ensuring more visibility and recognition for women in film (20). The implementation of the proposed strategies will transform the film industry and will enable more women to participate meaningfully.

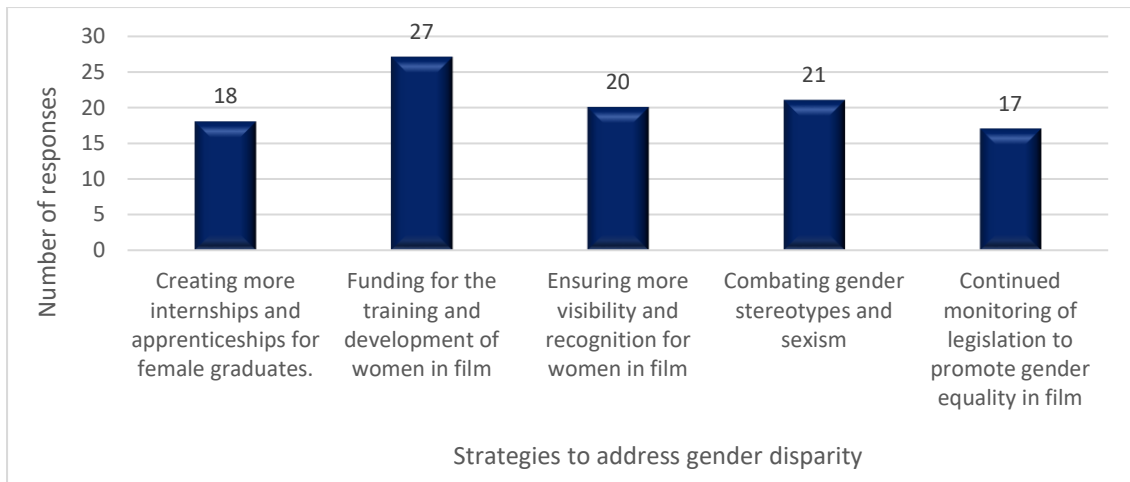


Figure 28: Strategies to bridge the gender disparity gap within the industry

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section covers the recommendations and strategies proposed by the research participants. The recommendations are divided into three subsections i.e., recommendations for the industry; recommendations for the KZN Film Commission; and recommendations for the academic institutions:

### (i) Recommendations for the industry

- Fostering more female-targeted international internship programmes.
- Provision of mentorship programs that pair experienced female professionals with aspiring women in the film industry. These programs can help build confidence, develop skills, and help aspiring creatives navigate the industry's complexities.
- Establishment of labour unions in the film industry to deal with issues of inclusivity, diversity, safety of women and equality.
- Women of all races should be supported in the film industry.
- Afford women equal opportunities in technical jobs e.g. directors of production, pullers, gaffers, key grips, camera, lighting, and grips. Not all women aspire to work in makeup, hair & wardrobe.
- Providing a safe, conducive, and supportive work environment for women.
- Combating gender stereotypes and sexism within the industry and ensuring more visibility and recognition for women in film.
- Push for talent and experience when it comes to job opportunities and rely less on informal connections and networking.
- More female representation in the industry so that aspirant female filmmakers can be inspired.

- Female production team as strategy to increase the participation of women in the Film industry i.e., female directors and producers are a key to getting more women behind the scenes.

**(ii) Recommendations for KZNFC**

- Establish specialized training and skill development programs that cater specifically to women in the film industry. These programs can focus on enhancing technical skills, fostering creative development, providing mentorship opportunities to support women in advancing their careers and developing business proposals for funding opportunities.
- The application processes for obtaining grants should be more transparent and inclusive to ensure that everyone benefits and not just be offered to established production companies.
- The establishment of a KZNFC broadcasting channel where local creatives can share their content without the fear of being overrun or exploited by established production companies.
- Promoting women's participation in the KZN film industry requires a multifaceted approach that addresses systemic barriers and individual empowerment such as gender-equal policies.
- Organizing networking events (seminars, summits) specifically tailored to women in the film industry can provide a supportive platform for fostering connections and collaborations.
- Implementing diversity and inclusion training for industry professionals
- Providing access to funding and production resources specifically for women-led projects.
- Establishment of film resource hubs, where female filmmakers can have access to government-owned equipment to write and produce their work.
- Establishment of the whistle-blower line that will allow victims of sexual exploitation in the industry to report the perpetrators.

**(iii) Recommendations for academic institutions**

- Academic institutions to form partnerships with industry to ensure the relevance and alignment of the curriculum with industry demands.
- Career expos and workshops for graduates should be held regularly that will highlight employment opportunities, experience and or skills that are in demand in the film industry.

- Government must undertake an effective reappraisal of various public policies and programmes designed to generate adequate economic opportunities capable of creating jobs for the unemployed graduates.
- Align course content with specific needs of the employers. Often, the curriculum is designed in isolation without tapping into what is required/demanded by the industry.
- Vocational training should be prioritized by the institutions of higher learning, especially for final year and postgraduate students.
- Work readiness programmes, coaching and mentorship are crucial for graduates in the film industry.
- Final year students should be linked or placed with industry where they will gain practical experience and exposure.
- Work integrated Learning is important for students or newly graduates to gain an exposure or work experience.
- Students should be trained on critical technical skills that are required by the industry; this will enhance their employability.
- Graduates should be trained and encouraged to write their own unique and proudly South African stories that will embrace our history, culture, religion, and diversity.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The film sector, with its interconnected stages of production, distribution, exhibition, and consumption, plays a significant role in both the entertainment industry and the country's economy. Through its diverse contributions, including revenue generation, job creation, cultural preservation, and artistic expression, the film industry enriches society and provides audiences worldwide with compelling audio-visual experiences. To ensure its continued success, collaboration between policymakers and industry stakeholders is essential in addressing challenges and promoting a thriving film industry that not only entertains but also drives economic growth and cultural diversity on a global scale.

The film sector has witnessed significant transformations, with global appeal driven by technological advancements and increased accessibility to diverse content. International collaborations, digital streaming platforms, and co-productions have reshaped the industry, offering a wealth of opportunities for filmmakers and audiences worldwide. In South Africa, the film industry has flourished, reflecting the nation's cultural diversity, and addressing social issues through powerful storytelling. Efforts to nurture emerging talent and foster international

collaborations have bolstered the industry's growth and economic impact. However, women's representation in the film sector remains a pressing challenge. Gender inequality, limited access to education and funding, lack of role models and mentorship, bias in distribution, and family-work balance issues hinder women from fully participating in the industry.

To address these challenges, promoting diversity and inclusion, providing access to education and training, supporting female filmmakers, promoting gender equality, and encouraging mentorship and networking opportunities are crucial steps toward a more inclusive and equitable film industry. By embracing these strategies, the film sector can tap into the creative potential of a diverse range of talents, ultimately enriching storytelling and driving success on both artistic and economic fronts.

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