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Bimbo Ademoye, YouTube and Copyright in Nigeria: Legal Issues Under the Copyright Act, 2022

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Introduction

The digital distribution of creative content has fundamentally altered how Nigerian filmmakers engage with audiences, monetize their works, and protect their intellectual property. Platforms such as YouTube have become important tools for filmmakers seeking direct access to viewers without the traditional constraints of cinema distribution and television licensing or modern approach of digital streaming. However, this shift has also exposed creators to new legal vulnerabilities, particularly in relation to copyright enforcement mechanisms that operate across jurisdictions and rely heavily on automated systems. The copyright dispute involving Nollywood actress and filmmaker Bimbo Ademoye and her film *Where Love Lives* illustrates these emerging challenges and raises important questions about the effectiveness of Nigerian copyright law in regulating online infringement and misrepresentation.

The incident, which led to the demonetization of Ademoye's film on YouTube following a copyright claim over a soundtrack used in the movie, attracted widespread public attention. Beyond the personal impact on the filmmaker, the dispute provides a useful lens through which to examine the scope of copyright protection under the Copyright Act, 2022, particularly as it relates to audiovisual works, musical works, online enforcement, and the misuse of copyright claims in digital environments.

Background to the YouTube Copyright Dispute

In December 2025, Bimbo Ademoye released *Where Love Lives* on her official YouTube channel. The film gained significant traction within a short period, recording millions of views and generating substantial engagement. This success was disrupted when YouTube applied monetization restrictions to the video following a copyright claim relating to a song featured in the film. As is standard practice on the platform, the claim resulted in the suspension or diversion of advertising revenue pending resolution of the dispute.

According to publicly available reports and statements by Ademoye, the claim was filed by an individual named "Emmanuel Davies," and operating under the

alias “Lagos Sound,” who alleged ownership of the song used in the film. This individual reportedly uploaded the song to music streaming platforms and identified himself as the copyright owner. Ademoye, however, maintained that she had lawfully acquired the right to use the song, having paid for it and obtained the necessary permission from the original artist. She characterized the claim as fraudulent and described the consequences as financially and emotionally distressing.

The operation of YouTube’s copyright enforcement system meant that the claim was initially treated as valid, without an immediate assessment of the underlying contractual or ownership arrangements. This resulted in demonetization despite the filmmaker’s assertion of lawful use. Following the submission of counterclaims, the restriction was eventually lifted, and the claim was removed.

Copyright Protection Under the Nigerian Copyright Act 2022

The Copyright Act 2022 repealed the Copyright Act (LFN 2004) and introduced provisions aimed at addressing contemporary challenges associated with digital content creation and dissemination. The Act expressly recognises a wide range of protected works, including literary works, musical works, sound recordings, broadcasts, and audiovisual works. Films such as *Where Love Lives* therefore fall squarely within the category of protected subject matter.

Sections 9-13 of the Act confers exclusive rights on the owner, including the right to reproduce the work, distribute copies, communicate the work to the public, and make it available online. These rights are particularly relevant in the context of YouTube distribution, where the act of uploading a film constitutes communication to the public through electronic means. Any unauthorised interference with these rights may amount to infringement under the Act.

Also, **section 14** of the Act introduces moral rights which is the right of an author to be identified as such and the right to object to false attribution of authorship. In situations where an individual falsely claims ownership of a work or a component of a work, moral rights become a critical legal tool for addressing misrepresentation and reputational harm.

Ownership of Copyright and Licensing of Musical Works

Section 30(1) of the Act vests copyright in the author of the work, subject to any agreement to the contrary. In the case of musical works and sound recordings, ownership may be divided between the composer, the performer, and the producer, depending on the circumstances of creation and any contractual arrangements. This complexity often gives rise to disputes where licensing arrangements are poorly documented or misunderstood.

In audiovisual productions, the use of music requires a licence from the relevant rights holder. This may include rights to the musical composition itself and rights to the sound recording. Where such licences are validly obtained, the use of the music forms part of the lawful exploitation of the audiovisual work. A third party who falsely asserts ownership over the licensed material may therefore be interfering with the legitimate exercise of the producer's copyright.

The Ademoye YouTube copyright dispute demonstrates the importance of clear and comprehensive licensing agreements this is because written contracts specify ownership, scope of use, duration, and permitted modes of exploitation provide crucial evidence in the event of disputes. Such agreements play a central role in determining whether a use is authorised and whether a subsequent claim constitutes infringement or misrepresentation.

Online Enforcement and Notice and Takedown Procedures

One of the most significant innovations of the Copyright Act, 2022 is its treatment of online infringement. **Sections 54 and 55** of the Act establish a statutory notice and takedown framework designed to regulate how service providers respond to allegations of copyright infringement. These provisions are particularly relevant to digital platforms such as YouTube, which function as intermediaries between content creators and the public.

Section 54 of the Act permits a copyright owner to issue a notice of infringement to a service provider, requesting the removal or disabling of access to infringing material. The notice must contain sufficient information to identify the work and the alleged infringement. Upon receipt of a valid notice, **Section 55** of the Act obliges the service provider to notify the uploader of the content and to take appropriate steps, including removal or restriction, unless the uploader submits a counter notice disputing the claim.

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This framework seeks to balance the protection of copyright with procedural fairness. However, in practice, global platforms often rely on internal policies and automated systems that may not fully reflect the safeguards envisaged by domestic legislation. As seen in Ademoye's case, monetization restrictions may be imposed before the merits of a claim are adequately assessed, thereby placing the burden on the content creator to prove lawful use.

Misrepresentation and Abuse of Copyright Claims

The Copyright Act recognizes the potential for abuse within online enforcement systems. **Section 57** of the Act addresses misrepresentation in infringement notices and counter notices, it provides that a person who knowingly makes a false claim of infringement or misrepresents ownership of copyright may be liable for damages suffered by the affected party.

This provision is particularly significant in cases where individuals exploit digital platforms to assert rights they do not possess. False copyright claims can result in loss of revenue, reputational harm, and disruption of lawful exploitation of works. By imposing liability for misrepresentation, the Act seeks to deter fraudulent claims and promote responsible use of enforcement mechanisms.

In the Ademoye YouTube copyright dispute, the alleged conduct of uploading a song to streaming platforms and falsely claiming authorship may fall within the scope of misrepresentation contemplated by the Act. Where such conduct can be established, the affected copyright owner may pursue civil remedies under Nigerian law in addition to platform-based dispute resolution.

Implications for Nigerian Creators and Filmmakers

The dispute involving *Where Love Lives* highlights broader challenges faced by Nigerian creators operating in digital spaces. While platforms like YouTube provide unprecedented access to global audiences, they also expose creators to enforcement systems that may not adequately account for local legal realities or contractual arrangements.

One key lesson is the importance of meticulous rights management. Filmmakers must ensure that all components of their works are properly licensed and that documentary evidence is readily available. This includes maintaining clear records of payments, contracts, and correspondence with collaborators and rights holders.

Additionally, creators should familiarize themselves with the enforcement tools available under Nigerian law. The notice and takedown provisions of the Copyright Act, 2022 provide a statutory basis for challenging infringing content and addressing misrepresentation. Engagement with the Nigerian Copyright Commission may also be appropriate where disputes involve systemic abuse or cross border elements.

Conclusion

The YouTube copyright dispute involving Bimbo Ademoye serves as a timely illustration of the legal and practical challenges that accompany digital content distribution. While the resolution of the dispute ultimately favoured the filmmaker, the incident exposes vulnerabilities within automated enforcement systems and underscores the importance of robust domestic legal protections.

The Copyright Act, 2022 provides a comprehensive framework for protecting creators in the digital environment. Its provisions on ownership, moral rights, online enforcement, and misrepresentation are particularly relevant to disputes arising on global platforms. For Nigerian filmmakers and content creators, an informed understanding of these provisions is essential for safeguarding creative investments and ensuring that the benefits of digital distribution are not undermined by unlawful claims or procedural deficiencies.



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