

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Nigerian theatre in a digital era and environment

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Abstract: Theatre, the earliest form of entertainment and enlightenment in Nigeria, is becoming a ghost of itself as a result of its inability to take on the colouration of the times. Some scholars are of the view that there should be a revival of the theatre by establishing more theatre while it remains bonded to its functional root, the live stage, because of its uniqueness. This study examined the likelihood of this renaissance and its survival in the face of the deluge of other media of entertainment in a digitally advanced era and environment. The study relied on the Media Displacement Theory, MDT, which explains a paradigm shift in an individual's use of new media by discarding the preceding one. Using in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions, FGD, the study revealed that live theatre-going culture has become unpopular with the Nigerian audience as a result of digital technology and sundry circumstances in recent times, which include insecurity and the COVID-19 outbreak that negates public gathering. The paper advanced that Nigerian theatre cannot afford to remain glued to its roots in a technologically digitalised environment or society, but has to evolve.

Keywords: entertainment, Nigeria, theatre, theatre-going culture, digitisation

1 Introduction

Theatre, the earliest form of entertainment and enlightenment in Nigeria, is becoming a shadow of its past glory. With the avalanche of other media of entertainment, such as television, film, and the social media, the Nigerian theatre is losing its audience and is set to go into extinction, "as theatre cannot thrive without an audience" (Adedeji, 1998). The trailblazing works of Hubert Ogunde, Kola Ogunmola, and Duro Ladipo in Yoruba theatre have not been sustained. Likewise, the theatre in English, which had its roots in the educational system introduced by the colonial masters for cultural enlightenment, entertainment, and teaching purposes and spearheaded by Wole Soyinka with his Orisun Theatre Company (1963) and Ola Rotimi and the Olokun Theatre Company (1968), has dwindled and waned off. The evolution of the internet in the 1960s (Cohen-Almagor, 2011; Curran, 2016), has revolutionised virtually all fields of endeavours, including the Sciences, Social Sciences and Arts. Through the internet, it is now feasible to interact and see content without being present in a geographic location. Thus, with digital technology, there is a marked change from physical to virtual. In the view of Schaefer (2005) with the present technological advancement "individuals, and societies will face unprecedented challenges in adjusting to technological advances still to come."

Apart from educational theatres or theatres in educational institutions, which Nwadiuwe, over a decade ago, believes to be in decay and lacked essential facilities and ample manpower (Nwadiuwe, 2005), and established for the training of students in the field of drama and theatre, the professional theatres, established for their commercial benefits, have drastically reduced, ceased to exist, or metamorphosed into other mediums of entertainment as a result of the digital revolution. Hubert Ogunde, the forerunner of the Nigerian Theatre, was enmeshed in this web of migration as he made a direct transference of his stage performances to screen when the film medium became in vogue in Nigeria. Daramola (2021) corroborates the above when he notes that the first generation of legendary filmmakers, Hubert Ogunde, Jab Adu, Ola Balogun, Moses Olaiya (Baba Sala), Adeyemi Afolayan aka Ade Love, and Eddy Ugboma, began their theatre careers through stage troupe performances and gradually glided into the production of movies through the celluloid format. This situation, perhaps, made Imiti (2019) assert that "cinema or movie has come to stay, building on the footprints of stage or theatrical performances." Also, in her reaction to this apparent circumstance, Mrs. Uzamat Akinbile-Yussuf, the Lagos State Commissioner for Tourism, Arts and Culture, revealed the state government's preparedness to revive the theatre-going culture through the creation of functional theatres across Lagos State (Ayeni, 2022). Uzamat's statement confirms the fact that Nigerian theatres have remained nonfunctional.

No doubt, live theatre-going culture, which was a fashion in the 1970s and 1990s, has been reduced, if not completely dead. As it stands, it seems most Nigerians, for various alternative

means of entertainment and other sundry reasons are no longer interested in visiting the theatre, “people are turning to video, film, Internet and Internet sites that host visual reality for entertainment. The mode of producing theatre and the overall effect of the theatre is changing” (Eni, 2012). Even theatre practitioners, Just like Nigerian’s first generation filmmakers, aforementioned, have abandoned the business of theatre productions, embracing film and other digital production platforms in a bid to be globally visible as well as reach a larger audience towards maximising profit. Preliminary investigation reveals insecurity, a bleak economy, and mobility among the reasons adduced by some theatregoers for abandoning the theatre-going culture.

This study uses theatre, which is broadly a collaborative art (Oshionebo & Asen, 2017), as the performance of dramatic events for a viewing audience by a professional troupe. It also means the staging of plays before an audience, either for entertainment or commercialisation; the history of which dates back to England’s Earl of Leicester Troupe, America’s Stock-and-Resident troupes, Nigeria’s Alarinjo Theatre, Yoruba Travelling Theatre, Orisun Theatre Company, and the Olokun Theatre Company.

While this study is not in any way advancing that the theatre-going culture *must* be revived in this digital era, it seeks that theatre follows the trend of time and move on with the tide and assume the colouration of other dramatic structures such as film, television, and other contemporary electronic forms. As the Nigerian audience is “now more visually alert than ever”, as vistas of entertainment, which include film, television, and the internet, are at their service (Eni, 2012). There is a need for a change in nomenclature. Theatre cannot be glued to its origins in an environment of digital and rapid change. Change and development are eminent and constant. Times have changed, and the theatre needs to adapt as well.

However, will the establishment of theatres, as hinted by Uzamat, revive the theatre-going culture? Or are Nigerian audiences still concerned about stage performances? These are some of the questions this study will attempt.

2 Theoretical framework

The world of entertainment, just like the medium of communication, is evolving on a daily basis, just as the audience/consumer taste is shifting. Change is imminent in human society. Change necessitates adaptation for relevance or survival. Ignore change and perish. Technological advancement, too, has led to a degree of change in all human endeavours. The technology that heralded digitisation has led to the disuse or displacement of analogue facilities. McCombs’ (1972) Media Displacement Theory, MDT, explains this paradigm shift in an individual’s use of new media of communication. Alluding to the television revolution that occurred in America in the 1940s, McCombs states that “the effects were drastic as consumers and media producers adjusted their behavior to this new communication medium” (McCombs, 1972). Bryant and Fondren (2009) see media displacement as the way media consumption displaces some other activity or activities. This invariably could be a misplaced view as their view tilts towards Time Displacement Theory. See (Putnam, 1995a; 1995b). In McCombs’ study, while he held the view that radio and the print medium managed to survive as they adapted through the change of style and content, in disparity, the movies were a direct casualty as the movie theatres closed in their numbers (McCombs, 1972).

According to Nguyen and Western (2006), media outlets are in competition with each other since multiple media might serve the same purposes for individuals. As a result, the traditional media will be replaced by the new one. This points to the fact that nothing lasts forever.

Some media scholars argue that there is no such thing as a total displacement of one medium by another. In his 1940 research, Lazarsfeld concluded that despite the invention of radio, newspapers were still exciting as people still read the news in the newspapers that preceded it. However, Kayany and Yelsma (2000) counter that radio and newspapers exist because each functions differently. For them, any medium that offers the same functions would invariably be replaced by a newer invention. The validity of Kayany and Yelsma’s position cannot be faulted if one recalls the displacement of 2go by WhatsApp and Yahoo Messenger by other messaging apps. Lee and Leung (2008) also share the view that the use of the internet is displacing traditional media use such as television, newspapers, and radio. To them, the internet provides a viable replacement, not a second fiddle. This is the notion of displacement; a permanent replacement; a replacement of a medium by another over a period due to the lack of some functions of the previous medium. Displacement is different from substitution. While the former is permanent, the latter is temporary (Ha & Fang, 2012).

A Nigerian Facebook user, emphasising the temporality of things as a result of modern technology, reels out the following to further buttress this point. According to him:

(1) Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) displaced analogue landline telephones;

- (2) Android phones killed Windows phones;
- (3) Coloured television sent Black and White television packing;
- (4) Plasma television buried hunchback television;
- (5) Video Home System (VHS) buried celluloid;
- (6) VCD/DVD replaced VHS;
- (7) E-mail displaced letter writing and made useless Nigerian post offices;
- (8) Digital broadcasting/transmission rendered analogue transmission obsolete;
- (9) Automated Teller Machine (ATM) dispersed queues in Nigerian banks;
- (10) Point of Sale terminal displacing ATMs.

Bode Ojoniyi, an astute Nigerian theatre scholar, who disagrees with this displacement supposition by claiming that “it is clear from my experience of live theatre as recent as May 15, 2022 by the House of Arimatha Theatre Studio in Osogbo, that digital theatre cannot take the place of a live theatre”, however, acknowledges that:

“The challenges of studies in humanities in the wake of the on-going digital revolution in science and technology sum up the crisis of the place of live theatre in response to skit making on social media apart from the traditional film medium like cinemas and home videos (B. Ojoniyi, personal communication, June 21, 2022)”.

The above assertion can only be considered seriously if we had the existence of the “Houses of Arimathas”. Ojoniyi failed, in his argument, to take into account the paucity of live performance troupes and theatre in Nigeria and the vast audience that can be reached at any time and period in this digital era.

Flowing from the above and on the basis of the MDT, this paper contends that the Nigerian theatre and theatre-going culture have been displaced by other media of entertainment such as the cinema and film, and other digital viewing platforms such as Youtube, Netflix, Uscreen, IBM Cloud, Younow, and TikTok, to mention but a few. Thus, for the Nigerian theatre and its practitioners to remain relevant and survive, there must be a rethink beyond the box and embrace the opportunities provided by digital platforms as Nigerians are already on the digital space. A [Nigerian Communications Commission report \(2022\)](#) shows that Nigeria has about 204,578,953 telecommunication users, which means a guarantee that a remarkable Nigerian population use the internet.

Based on the above, this study predicts that the Nigerian theatre culture will not stand the test of emerging digital entertainment platforms and that theatre will be replaced by new and emerging media and technology unless it adapts to the trend(s) as well..

3 Materials and methods

For data collection, this study used in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). A total of twelve (12) people, out of a total of fifteen (15) people invited via SMS and e-mail, participated. This was made up of seven (7) males and five (5) females. Of these, two (2) were forty (40) years or older, and ten (10) others were between eighteen (18) and thirty-nine (39) years.

A total of five (5) persons, three of whom were theatre academics, were selected from an infinite population, and interviewed with the aim of exploring their experience and perspective on the subject matter. Interviews were based on structured questions on the state of the Nigerian theatre and the way forward, but not in any particular order. The period of this research was three (3) months.

4 Discussion

The FGD held with twelve (12) persons in attendance, to discuss the current state of the Nigerian theatre in digital era.

Probe question 1: What do you think about the state of live theatre in Nigeria?

All, except two, vehemently shared their views that live theatre is unpopular amongst them. And that they only watch drama sketches in church or parties attended, not by a professional performing troupe. Respondent V and VIII answered in the affirmative. These two respondents are forty years and above. Respondent V however retorted thus:

“Do we still have theatre building and troupes in Nigeria? I used to watch staged performances at the Notional Theatre, Lagos and I also saw a few troupes performing on the street. I used to enjoy them, but they are no more”.

Respondent VIII said he had had the privilege of watching drama performance at one of the state’s cultural centres in 2002, where the performance was to celebrate the state governor’s third year in office.

When asked if they enjoyed the live performances, respondent V and VIII responded in the affirmative, as respondent V adds that it was an opportunity seeing the actors face-to-face.

Probe question 2: How do you pass your leisure after the day's activities?

"Do we still have leisure in Nigeria?" respondent V snapped in. "Well, the little free time I have, I tune to Channels and Arise TVs for updates on the Nigerian polity." Other respondents, except III and IX, however, noted that they get entertained by watching movies on cable television, especially on African Magic and Zee World. Respondents III and IX were indifference.

In the words of respondent II, "before the advent of cable TV, I usually buy Nigerian movies on a weekly basis or as soon as they were released, but at a time I could not cope as they were released daily."

Probe question 3: Do you think theatre-going culture should be revived?

Respondent I

To be candid, I don't think it is necessary. To me I would not have the time to visit the theatre. In fact, where are the theatres?

Respondent II

I cannot emphatically say yes or otherwise. I am not used to that culture. I have not watched one before, so for those who cherish it, it can be revived. However, I feel times have changed. I enjoy watching movies on screen and on my phone once I have data. I think producing for screen would be more profitable than stage. Times have changed, so also the yawning for entertainment-seeking dudes like me.

Respondent III

Both speakers, (I and II), have expressed my thought and that is likewise my stand. Just to add that, nothing in life is static. I will only, like an advice, tell theatre actors and producers to move on with what is currently in vogue. I think we do not have to go back to the Stone Age.

Respondent IV

No. My reasons being that with the deteriorating security situation in the country, it is better one stays off crowded environment and beside this, transportation fare is increasing on a daily basis. I would rather deploy such money to subscribing my decoder (TV Top Box) which can afford me variety of movie channels such as Africa Magic, Nickelodeon. I have not been a theatre fan and I do not think I would fancy it if eventually revived.

Respondent V

Yes. Theatre and film are conglomerates. Theatre business should be revived and exist side by side film. As a person, I prefer live performance to film. It gives one the opportunity to be in a physical environment with the performers and feel the direct impact of performance. It is like watching a live football match on a pitch and on screen. The experience is totally different. Although I have my reservation, and that is, would there be an audience to patronise the theatre as we had it in the 80s? Besides, do we still have actors who will stake their time on stage plays in a screen-dominated society? Well, if there is rigorous orientation, there could be a revival.

Respondent VI

If the last speaker (Respondent V) is already aware of the dearth of stage actors, who have abandoned the stage for film making, then to me, there should not be a revival of theatre-going culture, rather live theatre should metamorphose and adjust to the taste of time by adopting the screen format. The craze for film has taken over the stage. I cannot mention any famous stage actor in the era, but we have famous movie actors, who are making waves in their profession. What is one living for, if not for fame and impact? As it stands, movie making will be more beneficial than live theatre. So I canvas for embracing the tide by embracing and utilizing the available technology to project performances to teeming Nigerian audience.

Respondent VII

I do not think it is necessary. If, since I was born, and my other contemporaries are not familiar with live theatre culture, it implies that such a culture is outdated and out of fashion with us. By inference, the world has gone beyond live theatre culture. What is next is to adjust to what is obtainable now. We are in a digital age, therefore, the fastest and easiest way of reaching an audience should be contemplated. So, to me the revival of the theatre is a no no.

Respondent VIII

Even though I had the opportunity of watching staged performance, I would not support the idea of a revival. I no longer have a taste for it, just as others have expressed distaste. Recent occurrences have contributed to this. Look at the security situation in the country. We no longer have a night life in Nigeria. A theatre performance is a night-time business, meant to relax one's nerves after a hectic day at the office. What about our road network? What about the Covid-19

outbreak, which has prohibited crowded environments since 2019? With these challenges with us, I think the best way to be entertained is to have it in your comfort zone, and this can be achieved through the film or screen medium, as we already have it. Instead of reviving the theatre-going culture, such efforts should be channelled towards developing the nation's film industry.

Respondent IX

In my opinion, the revival of theatre-going culture should be jettisoned for sponsorship of Nollywood movie producers. Even though movies produced are not comparable to those produced in India and America, we learn a lot from them. A little financing would enhance their content and quality. I love watching Nigeria movies. I watch either on screen or on my phone, I do not think I can be a theatre freak.

Respondent X

My take on this question has been expressed by respondents who spoke against the revival of theatre-going culture. The reasons adduced are germane to discourage such a move. The Nigerian theatre practitioners should harness the opportunity provided by technology to be on the global space rather than gluing themselves to their root and a limited audience. Theatre should move on to screen or online platforms, which now offer better benefits.

Respondent XI

Reviving theatre-going culture is not a bad idea. However, there is still a need to embrace the digital space. So many factors have really weakened the stage, just as others have mentioned. Recently, I saw a screen version of Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*. It was really captivating and I see reason for producers to put in more efforts in adaptation of these stage plays so that members of the society who do not have access to the institutional theatres can benefit from them. If the stage can survive the digital wave, no problem, but I do not think it can.

Respondent XII

I think it is easier said than done. Who is going to revive the theatre-going culture? Is it not the same government that is privatising anything privatisable, including the only surviving National Theatre in Lagos? If the governments were ready to sustain the theatre business in Nigeria since the establishment of the national theatre, they would have replicated the same in all the states and made the theatre a lucrative business for us to embrace. I believe film making is more profitable, and as a theatre artist, I would rather go for that which will profit me.

The views expressed by respondents in the interactive session show a lack of popularity of live theatre amongst the younger generation. The majority get entertainment by watching television, films, cable, satellite, and online streaming using their smart phones to connect to online streaming platforms and other movie showing apps. This shows that theatre is undergoing rapid extinction. Those who still yawn for live-theatre were not picky about it as they equally express worries over its suitability in present time. This demonstrates that the establishment of theatres, as postulated by Lagos State Commissioner for Tourism, Arts and Culture Uzamat Akinbile-Yussuf, will not revive the theatre-going culture as Nigerian audiences are not keen on stage performances. These responses, among other cited literature, have revealed much about the current state of the Nigerian theatre and its future, which are herein discussed.

5 Findings

From our discussion, the following factors have been identified as cancer that has killed or is about to kill the Nigerian live-theatre culture and needs immediate intervention:

(1) Film: The invention of the film medium changed world's entertainment. This was also the situation when the medium was introduced into Nigeria. With film in Nigeria, Bamidele had a prescience of the future of the Nigerian theatre when he posited that, "With the current stage in the development of the film industry, we are approaching the end of the...theatre era. We no longer see those actors we were used to on stage. Their faces are now a constant feature on the screen...(Bamidele, 1993). Unequivocally, Ekwuazi puts it differently that with film in Nigeria, "the stage, as far as the travelling theatres are concerned, is as good as dead..."(Ekwuazi, 1998) Apart from the existence of educational theatres, professional theatres have diminished and ceased to exist, just as the first generation of Nigerian moviemakers, Hubert Ogunde, Adeyemi Afolayan (Ade Love), and Eddy Ugboma, who were theatre professionals, abandoned the stage for filmmaking as soon as the medium became more popular amongst Nigerians.

(2) Insecurity: Findings reveal a high level of insecurity as a major challenge forcing the theatre to go into extinction. Stage performance is usually an evening business, meant for relaxation after a stressful day at work. While Chukwuma Anyanwu, a theatre scholar disagrees with the fact that film or digital technology has nothing to do with the non-functionality of stage performances, he however establishes that the bane of diminishing theatre-going culture is insecurity. In his words:

“The bane of live theatre is one, insecurity in the country, which cuts across all states. If you are not safe in your house by night, by day, so how would you feel comfortable going to expose yourself in a theatre in the afternoon or evening when you know that marauders, kidnappers *etc.* are there threatening lives and property. So who would want to endanger his/her life? Insecurity is most crucial and central problem to live theatre in Nigeria. And secondly, lack of finance. There is also the issue of hardcore practitioners. If anything is affecting live theatre actually, it should even be Nollywood; Nollywood in the sense that many people now want to delve into Nollywood. Do not forget that before now live stage was the fermenting ground for Nollywood actors. But now, it is turning around because of the insecurity earlier mentioned and materialism in our youth. Nobody wants to learn, nobody wants to struggle hard (A. Chukwuma, personal communication, July 28, 2022).”

By acknowledging the fact that migration of actors to Nollywood is one of the challenges bedevilling the theatre profession, Anyanwu has invariably attested to the film displacement paradigm.

(3) Digital online viewing platforms: Technological advancement has opened up the world and made it a global space. This has engendered rapid development from analogue to digital. Since the advent of the internet, virtually all fields of endeavours have been revolutionised. The entertainment industry is not left out. The internet has given room to birth of online viewing platforms like Youtube, Netflix, Uscreen, IBM Cloud, Younow, TikTok and a host of others. Content producers, some of whom are theatre professionals, have jettisoned the world of stage performance to embrace the opportunity these digital platforms offer. Precious Otomi, a theatre graduate now a moviemaker reveals in an interview that:

“Online platforms are more profitable. It is online that you now locate a potential audience for your content. If one wants to be visible globally, then one has to think outside the box, beyond the confines of the theatre building. The online platforms are safe, convenient, and equally affordable. Even if I was to do a stage performance, it would need to be captured and uploaded online.... Let me add here that a live performance that does not have an internet projection in this era is dead (P. Otomi, personal communication, July 28, 2022).”

From Otomi’s view above, it can be inferred that with online platforms, the problem of insecurity lurking against theatrical content and entertainment is surmounted. Corroborating Otomi, Ibagere states that the theatre curriculum in Nigerian universities offering theatre programmes needs to be reviewed to reflect present realities as the world has gone beyond the stage. According to him, “agreed that the educational theatre is the breeding ground for theatre artists, so must they (theatre artists) retain that nomenclature forever, even when times have changed?” (E. Ibagere, personal communication, July 28, 2022).

(4) Covid-19 pandemic: The final nail in the coffin of live theatre performance is the outbreak of Covid-19, which is still ravaging the world. Respondents expressed the view that with the pandemic with us, it is expedient to avoid crowded environments for one to be safe as stipulated by the World Health Organization (WHO). The effect of the current pandemic on live performances cannot be overstated. A research report by [Rurale et al. \(2020\)](#) in Europe reveals that in the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, and USA, there was a drastic shortfall in live performances “by an average of 56.12% in 2020 compared to the year before, and revenues dropped by a comparative 51.32% and full time employees by 12.17%.”

To curtail the spread of the Covid-19 virus, government of various nations and states enforced the restriction of “stay at home.” Schools were closed, travels banned, hotels, restaurants, theatres and live performance venues shut for over a period of time and are still to suffer in the near future ([Anyanwu et al., 2022](#); [Chatzichristodoulou et al., 2022a](#)). Apropos of the pandemic, “every aspect of our social life, from work to entertainment, moved online ([Chatzichristodoulou et al., 2022a](#)). With the pandemic with us and for the theatre to survive, it has to embrace the new ‘normal’, which digitisation offers.

(5) Transportation: It has been established that there is a dearth of live theatres in Nigeria. Another obvious fact is that even if they existed, the majority of their potential audience would have been unable to access them due to bad roads, a poor transportation system, exorbitant transport charges, and the insecurity of travelling by road. With bad roads, there is the tendency to spend more hours travelling on the road or even have a car breakdown, resulting to missed performances. In recent times in Nigeria, there have been astounding cases of kidnapping of travellers. In March 2022, an Abuja-Kaduna bound train was attacked, killing seven passengers, and others were taken hostage ([Hassan-Wuyo, 2022](#)). The incredibly dangerous nature of Nigerian roads compelled Peltier and Ezeamalu of the *New York Times* to emphatically describe them as unsafe routes (2022). The looming fear of being a victim, as expressed by respondents and interviewees, continues to haunt the Nigerian theatre-going audience, preventing them from contemplating attending an outdoor performance where there are supposed better alternatives.

6 The way forward

Various fields of endeavour have been affected by the upsurge of technology, which displaced an already existing equation. While some have adapted, others are still grappling with it. For instance, marketing and advertising of goods and services, television broadcasting, and communication are no longer the ways they used to be; they have gone digital. The educational sector has equally followed suit, as predicted by Baños and Bosch (2015), Griffith, as cited in Keirstead (2002), and Stoddard (2012), that there would come a time when film and video would serve as a remarkable tool for instructing school children in virtually everything in schools and *virtually too* (emphasis added). Learning is no longer confined to a square block; it has gone online, breaking the barriers of space. Digitisation has therefore simplified the complex, and opened vistas of global visibility. The entertainment industry in other climes seems to have embraced the digital culture, especially since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, as could be gleaned from McCaleb's (2020) view that a speedily increasing number of performers and venues retorted by going digital and making online the new live in the developed world. According to him:

“Live streaming of artistic performances is not new – but until now the practice has not been a significant alternative to the live music *and live theatre* (emphasis added) economy at large.... But there have also been concentrated efforts by venues and artists to reach online audiences. A number of well-established organisations such as the Wigmore Hall and the Royal Shakespeare Company regularly complement existing performance series with livestreaming to reach wider audiences or as educational outreach”.

In his view, therefore, artists should sustain this inadvertently provided opportunity to develop new ways of working with audiences, which might become an enduring part of a new reality. Other scholars (Bowers, 2022; Chatzichristodoulou et al., 2022b; Mosse et al., 2022; Schoenenberger, 2021; Sermon et al., 2022) equally share McCaleb's view. This research acknowledges, supports as well as recommends these views.

In light of the above, the Nigerian theatre cannot afford to remain glued to its roots in a technologically digitalised environment/society. Live theatre is being threatened by times and circumstances that call for a change in modus operandi; theatre makers in developed countries are already in the lead, adapting and changing the environment of performance, from the physical to the digital space. Nigerian theatre has to evolve and embrace the spatial environment made available by the internet and other hubs for live performances using digital technologies.

7 Conclusion

The Nigerian theatre has been examined vis-à-vis the wave of technological and digital advancement and the way it has impacted it by systematically displacing live theatre and inadvertently replacing it with new forms such as television, film/cinema and now digitisation facilitated by the internet. This is in addition to other related issues, such as insecurity and disease outbreaks, which have forced theatre-goers to abandon the venue in search of alternatives. To survive in the twenty-first century, Nigerian theatre must, without a doubt, adapt. A witticism in Nigeria states that if you are not updated, you will undoubtedly be outdated. Nigerian theatre practice must thus keep up with the times by seizing the opportunity offered by the digital space to reach out to its teeming audience and not be outdated. While this transition is not devoid of challenges, the prospects inherent outweigh the imagined challenges. Herein lies the future of the Nigerian theatre.

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