

Post-Covid, Audience Health and Sustainable Futures in Nigerian Dramatic Performances: A Case for Filmic Adaptation

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Abstract

In line with the lessons from the COVID-19 outbreak, this paper explored the potentials of adaptation of Nigerian dramatic texts into home-viewing films as a proactive measure to prevent the spread of pandemics. It examined the feasibility, challenges, and benefits of this approach in maintaining audience engagement with the performing arts while mitigating health risks. The paper emphasizes the importance of collaboration between film and theatre practitioners, production companies, streaming platforms, and technology providers to facilitate the transition, adaptation and distribution of dramatic texts and performances into home-viewing films. Technical guidelines are recommended to ensure a near-seamless transfer of the artistic integrity of live performances during the adaptation process. Enhancing audience engagement through techniques such as immersive sound design and close-ups is highlighted. Accessibility, affordability, and ethical considerations are addressed, and the significance of educational campaigns and continuous improvement through feedback collection is emphasized. The research concludes by advocating for the long-term integration of home-viewing adaptations into theatre strategies as it provides greater accessibility and flexibility to a wider range of audiences while also importantly safeguarding public health.

Keywords: Drama, Performance, Film Adaptation, Audience Health, COVID-19, Safety, Nigeria.

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Introduction

The promotion of safe and healthy living has taken the front burner on the headlines of human activities in recent times. Humanity has come to recognise that the health and general well-being of the world populace are pivotal to economic development and its sustenance. With the world just getting past a defining event that is the COVID-19 pandemic, and the world being launched into an era of increased possibility of the discovery of new deadly diseases – both communicable cum contagious and non-communicable ones- there is a great need for an urgent review and subsequently, resetting of agenda hinged on a pragmatic shift from the mentality of allowing health practitioners to deal with these precarious developments alone. This shift should be towards an all-encompassing approach wherein all professions and professionals articulate ways which when harmonised and implemented, would salvage the world from extinction through these emerging and re-emerging deadly diseases.

Recent developments have proven that medical approaches such as curative care cum interventions alone, cannot guarantee healthy living and health safety as the attainment of optimum health is influenced by so many variables beyond the realm of the health sector. To achieve healthy safety as well as healthy living in a multi-facet society like Nigeria, a multi-disciplinary approach that involves all disciplines must be developed and pursued. The reason for this is that diseases affect individuals indiscriminately, and the pandemic paralysed activities across all disciplines and so, there could be vital roles each discipline could play in ensuring that we all are healthy and safe from viral deadly diseases such as COVID-19. This collaboration among disciplines was also the approach of choice in the United States where Dahlander and Wallin (2020) declared that “now is the time for open innovation”, where the need for value creation comes even before the need to make a profit. It is in this quest to create value, that the need to collaborate even across disciplines comes in; the need to reach outside of existing networks to partner with complimentary skills and perspectives (Bernardo et al 2).

Theatre and film practice cum studies have been on the receiving end of society's disdain and practitioners of these art forms have faced ostracism from the society. Around the 1970s, in Nigeria, famous Performing Artist, Fela Kuti encountered this problem with society. Women were often harassed when they went to musical shows either as performers or audiences (White 301). For participating in theatrical performances, women were called prostitutes, parents drove their children away from home (Moore 185), and when these performers, especially female performers, wanted to marry, men chose not to marry them. The experience with people

unwilling to marry them also affected the male theatre practitioners as Chief Ogunde, Nigeria's foremost theatre artist, also had a similar experience. He reported that in the 1940s, no one wanted their daughters to marry an 'Alarinjo', a word used to describe an itinerant performer but generally used to refer to performers (Nwakunor The Guardian).

As a discipline that embodies entertainment and actively sparks people's interest, theatre and the performing art generally soars far above its contemporaries in influencing behaviours and outcomes of its audiences' lives. Hence, the need that at a time as this, when people are still trying to figure out how unprepared the world was for such a pandemic in this age of heightened knowledge and discoveries, that theatre and film practitioners cum scholars begin to renegotiate and re-navigate the tide to ensure safety of the people (the audience). Indeed, without the existence of people there would be no theatre or theatrical/dramatic performances as performances depend on audience relations and interactions (Heim 8).

Theatre, Drama or film is made of people, by people and for people. Consequently, the people's lives and health are top priority for the theatre. And who are these people whose health theatre must prioritise? They are the humans of theatre. They are those who "contribute to the actualisation of theatre productions" (Ibironke 97). A threat to humans' collective existence is, therefore, an existential threat to the theatre practise as humans constitute an inalienable part of the theatre production and consumption process. To this end, this study will consider the state of dramatic/theatrical performances in the post-COVID-19 world and how the practice and its audience could be saved from health disasters through film adaptation. Methodologically, the study opts for the historical research method as Aloysius Uzoagulu notes that it "...is for the purpose of gaining a better and clearer understanding of the present and making a more reliable prediction of the future while meaningful and insightful logical inferences will be drawn from the study through dialectics in order to substantiate the outcome of the study.

On the other hand, dialectics is a direct opposite of empirical research. It draws away attention from total focus on analysis and interpretation but rather shifts the process to focus on ideas and arguments developed through proper logic (Emeka Nwabueze 83). The Diffusion of Innovations theory which centres on the adoption of new ideas and media serves as the theoretical framework of the study. Initially pioneered as early as 1903 by Gabriel Tarde, a French sociologist, the theory examines the circumstances which increase or decrease the likelihood that a new idea, product, or practice will be adopted by members of a given culture,

here in the practitioners of theatre and film. This theory presupposes that media as well as other factors provide information and influence views and judgements. Rogers later on while studying how these innovations occur stipulates that it goes through the four stages of “invention, diffusion through the social system, time and consequences” (Communication Theories 10).

Dramatic Performances Amidst COVID-19

The reality of the pandemic that has brought the world to its knees is a fact that many of the world's populace are yet to grab a hold on. Unlike the pangs of childbirth that cease at delivery, the disease christened ‘COVID-19’ kept on ravaging nations, overwhelming health practitioners and facilities with unquantifiable resultant casualties recorded daily with no end in sight. Easily traced to China and Wuhan precisely as its motherland, Chengdi et al observe that:

In December 2019, a novel pneumonia with a high potential of transmissibility between humans was first reported. As a number of the initially identified cases had visited a large seafood and live animal market, some investigators were prompted to have an unconfirmed suspicion that this might be the initial source of infection... The Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, along with other related institutions, quickly identified the pathogen as a new type of coronavirus (1).

MacIntyre Raina corroborates that, ‘The epidemic began in December 2019...’ (1) and afterwards it spread throughout the world. “In severe cases, ...patients can develop acute respiratory distress syndrome in a short period of time and die due to multiple organ failure” (Cirrincione et al 3). “Extraordinary and unprecedented measures taken in China, which involved travel restrictions for almost half the population and lockdown of a population greater in size than the entire population of the United States resulted in a decline in cases in China” (1).

These measures were replicated the world over and even stiffened in some countries which ultimately affected human existence as healthy safety became prioritised throughout society. In this regard, the trajectory of non-pharmaceutical measures of halting the spread of COVID-19 propagated by medical practitioners and the media held sway. The non-pharmaceutical measures include 14-day home quarantine for those who live, work or return from COVID-19-prone areas, selective control and measurement of body temperature, reduction of the number of persons within each confined environment, and work-from-home where possible and also the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Other measures promoted include the reduction of direct physical contacts like shaking of hands; avoidance of direct unprotected contact with secretions especially coughing and touching used stairs rails or paper tissues with bare hands. Added measures include total departure from being in direct contact with others within two (2) metres or for more than fifteen (15) minutes as well as minimising contact with people in closed environments like classrooms, meeting rooms, hospital waiting rooms, theatres beyond 15 Minutes and at a distance of fewer than 2 metres (Cirrincione et al 7-8). Going by this, every aspect of human activity that involved physical participation and gathering became threatened with dramatic performances not left out. At this point, it becomes exigent to reflect on dramatic performance.

Explaining the root word ‘drama’ ABC Duruaku submits that:

The word “drama’ evokes many ideas. Everyone has probably used the word at some point in describing situations or events... Whether the noun ‘drama’ is used or the adjective ‘dramatic’ is applied, one thing is clear: drama is associated with excitement, uncommonness, mental/emotional/physical action, and uniqueness. In other words, there is a sense of verve and a feeling of dynamism when ‘drama’ is concerned (2).

This lay bare the need to carefully define the concept in relation to this study in order to forestall any misinterpretation that could arise from the many ideas that could be evoked in the minds of critics and scholars alike at the use of the word ‘drama’.

To this end, Emeka Nwabueze submits that “to understand drama as an art which serves a bi-partite purpose, it is necessary to discuss the meaning of drama...” (11), and so opines that “Drama is a work of art which delineates human life and activity through the presentation of actions by means of dialogue between groups of characters. Though a literary work, drama is mainly designed to be acted on stage. This is why it is referred to as the playwright’s art” (15) while Onyeka Iwuchukwu acknowledges that:

Drama as a literary genre is realised in performance...As a literary form, it is designed for the theatre because characters are assigned roles and they act out their roles as the action is enacted on stage. These characters can be human beings, dead or spiritual beings, animals, or abstract qualities. Drama is an adaptation, recreation and reflection of reality on stage. Generally, the word, dramatist is used for any artist who is involved in any dramatic composition either in writing or in performance (3).

Iwuchukwu’s submission above highlights that performance is core to the existence of drama. It is also the most active of other genres of literature because of the immediate impact it has on

the audience. It is used to inform, educate, entertain and in some cases mobilise the audience
(3). Coming from a practical point of view, ABC Duruaku defines dramatic performance as:

Drama transferred from the script or story phase to the stage; i.e. from a ‘lifeless’ story to a ‘living’ action for an audience to see. It is the life that is given to the script of the playwright on a spatial environment through the cooperative effort of actors, directors, designers and a host of other people that help gives life to the script... In summary, therefore, a dramatic performance is a fictional story told in action, before an audience, by actors (players) on a given space (stage) (9).

Duruaku’s precise definition presupposes that audiences are integral to the realisation of dramatic performances. They are the final consumers and the reason for the continued existence of dramatic performances. This perspective is further buttressed in the submission that “traditional theatre is defined as a theatre performance presented live in front of an audience occupying the same space as the performers” (Creative Australia 2). In this vein, Oscar Brockett and Robert Ball submit that “an effective performance can be far more satisfying than a reading because it translates words on a page into the sensual language of the stage, immediate and present in the living flesh and voices of the actors and the physical environment created by the designers” (25). In addition, “Dramatic performances share many characteristics with sports and games” (12). Deductively, a clear characteristic similarity between dramatic performance and sports/games is audience. Sports is engaged not just for fun or physical fitness but largely for the audience. Aside from sponsorships from partner brands, sports audiences keep the game going via gate takings. The audience emotional aspect of sports cannot be felt without the audience, likewise in dramatic performances. This is why “All types of... performances require an audience because it is in the mind and imagination of the spectator that final step in the creative process occurs” (Brockett and Ball 25).

During the pandemic, the National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health (NCCEH) acknowledged that at such a time, there are so many factors to be considered in dramatic performances which include the acting, rehearsals cum practice sessions, interactions between actors and management or organisers of the show in the cases of private theatres, theatre staff and audiences. Beyond these, other factors that are of utmost importance like the age and number of the actors, the degree of interaction between the performers or actors, the spatial dimension of the theatre, size and characteristics of the audience cannot be neglected, as they make the containment of the spread of such contagious air-borne diseases a tedious task.

These theatrical settings and activities are by nature designed to “give rise to increased closed contact, exposure to respiratory droplets, aerosols and contacts with contaminated surfaces leading to increased risk of transmission of contagious diseases”. For instance, assembling in large numbers for a good length of time in enclosed spaces or rooms with little provisions for ventilation abound in theatrical cum dramatic performance experiences and spaces like dressing rooms, orchestral pits, rehearsal rooms, etc. This could result in heightened risk of accumulation or concentration of respiratory aerosols that do not drop easily to the ground but rather disperses faster via ventilation. In addition, sharing of surfaces and performance kits and props like chairs, and makeup supplies directly increases the risk of fomite transmission.

Regarding the audience of dramatic performances which is the focal point of this study, high risk due to close contact may be present both for seating and standing audiences. When people gather for any event especially thrilling ones in the mode of dramatic cum theatrical performances, chances of them mingling and exchanging views on such performances either before or after are very high. These interactions may occur during intermissions or intervals within the show or in refreshment queues. There is also a high tendency of fomite transmission among the audience through sharing of surfaces at conveniences or restrooms, entry or exit points of the theatre or performance venue (NCCEH). Mira Felner and Claudia Orenstein agree that “Many factors can affect the degree of interaction among audience members. The spatial configuration of the theatre and lighting can contribute to a heightened awareness of other people’s responses. Performances outdoors in daylight tend to make us feel part of a crowd” (28).

If then dramatic performances require an audience to be complete, what happens in a world where the possibility of a pandemic spread through close contact between persons is an active reality? What lessons can be learnt from the Covid experiences and how can audience health safety be ensured amidst possibilities of further pandemic outbreaks? These specifics are pungent in considering the futures of our societies. The fact also, that the COVID-19 experience has greatly impacted the performance-audience communion which the theatre offers, also fuels this study about seeking alternative sustainable futures for the live theatre practices. With attendant disaffection for vaccines, flagrant neglect of safety protocols as well as inappropriate cum poor public enlightenment for the masses towards engendering public healthy safety, it becomes imperative that researchers begin to tinker toward ensuring the safety of the audience of dramatic performances which is what this study intends to proffer plausible answer to.

Film Adaptation and Audience Health Safety

Film adaptation could be best described as a child whose existence and continued existence is attached to its mother. The concept of film adaptation cannot be discussed without a view into what film is. According to Patrick Phillips, “Film is a beautiful and amazing medium that has become too familiar” (3) while Innocent Ohiri explains that “Film is also called Motion Pictures or Cinema. The word ‘Cinema’ comes from the Greek word ‘Kinema’ which means “motion pictures.” The pictures or images are recorded on film - a ribbon of transparent plastic material with sensitive coating of the photographic plate.” (50) Contributing to the definition of film, Emman-Owums Owuamalam writes that:

Films are series of recorded images, stored in retrievable manner. The images are recorded on a photosensitive material, when exposed to light. The film can be recalled and reviewed at will... Film is a communication tool. It provides an idea from an identifiable source, using its specific format and medium, to share experience with persons, serving as its audience or consumer of its content (199).

It can be deduced from above submissions that film is not different from cinema or motion picture as these terms can be used interchangeably to describe the concept under study. Although films are recorded images, the recording here is done in a coherent manner with the motive of communication in mind. The images are causally recorded to pass across the ideology or ideologies of the film maker. “The language-like qualities of a film were also considered central to an understanding of how a film works in communicating meaning and ideas” (Phillips 3).

The capacity of these recorded images to be recalled and reviewed at will sets film on a different level from other creative media. Having deduced meaning from the above definition, we can adopt a simple meaning of film for this study thus: Film is an audio-visual depiction of narratives which could be fictional or actual through appropriate characterization and employment of suitable filmic techniques and effects, that is targeted toward passing across a message to its audience and creating the desired effect. Film has become a medium too familiar in every clime of the world today with several developments witnessed in the practice of film over time which includes film adaptation. Film adaptation is a creative recreation of an artistic creation, from a source text (prose/drama) to a filmic form while sustaining significant recognizable features of the source in the recreated form without utterly distorting the underlined ideology of the source (Divine Joe 107).

On the relationship between dramatic texts - the basis of dramatic performances- and film adaptation, Papiya Nabi notes that “Adaptation is related to literature since a very long time and the flow of time has made adaptation depending or associated with literature” (9). This flow of time in Nabi’s submission could be deciphered to mean the turn of events within the society where in adaptation is practiced, but in such a time as this the reverse is the case. Literature, in this case, dramatic texts and its performance as well as its audience would have to depend on film adaptation for preservation from the diseases like COVID-19. Karolina Sadlowski et al are of the opinion that a disruption is “an event in which an agent must redesign its strategy to survive a change in the environment, affecting the ecosystem as a whole” (411-412).

The disruption occasioned by COVID-19 calls for a change in plan for dramatists. No matter how thrilling a dramatic performance is, it cannot be valued above the lives of the audience as it takes the living to experience a theatrical or dramatic performance. This is the reason why measures to ensure that the audience remain safe should become a priority among scholars today. Dramatic performances communicate meaning to its audience like films do through recorded audio-visuals. However, the advantage that comes with recreating these texts in films lays in the mobility of the film medium which came about through digital technology. The reason for this is that, “dynamic digital expansion is increasingly becoming one of the major themes in the academic and industry talks about the future of film distribution.

Interest in film distribution has become more pronounced in recent years, especially focusing on exhibition, movie-going, cultural geography, and audience studies” (412). In spite of the shutdown of entertainment venues during the pandemic, cinemas inclusive, filmmaking, distribution and viewership continued to thrive even in the pandemic. Online streaming services, like Netflix for example experienced significantly improved numbers. A study showed that the number of people who subscribed to Netflix and watched more than 10 hours per week before the pandemic was just 16%, however during the pandemic, the number grew to 38% (Pisal 25). Business analyst, John Blackledge, reported that following a phenomenal first quarter, Netflix added more than double its paid internet advertising guide (Blylund 2021). As the pandemic became widespread, Netflix shares rose up to 35%, an indication of its soaring value (Owens et al 2020).

The main reason for the lockdown of theatres and other performance venues is the attendant high risk of audience interaction. This takes one back to Mira Felner and Claudia Orenstein’s

earlier opinion that: “Many factors can affect the degree of interaction among audience members. The spatial configuration of the theatre and lighting can contribute to a heightened awareness of other people’s responses. Performances outdoors in daylight tend to make us feel part of a crowd...The audience is the one thing that changes completely every night...” (28). Meaning that no level of control can prevent audience interaction in addition to the flux in individuals who make-up the audience which is offers room for faster community transmission of communicable diseases as COVID-19. However, digital innovation which are concerted orchestration of new products, new processes, new services, new platforms, or even new business models which include technological changes, have led to modern audience evolution and media consumption. Today, two main phenomena have resulted from this which are audience fragmentation and audience autonomy (Felner and Orenstein 415).

These offers the audience safer means of accessing their beloved cum cherished dramatic literatures in filmic forms through online platforms as Netflix and Amazon. Also, indigenous platforms like RokTV have made transmission of films a lot easier digitally, as they purchase the full or/ partial rights to these films and make them available for online-audience who subscribe to see them. Therefore, if dramatists are to survive alongside their works, as well as save the die-hard audience of dramatic performances from the hazard of continued theatre attendance in this post-Covid era, there is great need for there to be a well-thought-out collaboration between the playwrights and filmmakers in adaptation.

With emphasis on the objective of this paper which is the subject of audience health safety, online audience of adapted films have tremendous advantage above on-sight audience of dramatic performance. “Films can be watched ... at home on television or computers, or on personal mobile devices, and people can choose to watch films alone, with friends and family, or with others” (Hanchard, Merrington and Wessels 116). An online audience won’t have to deal with crowd/gathering of people whose health status may not be easily determined. Even where and when there is an insistence on proof of vaccination from contagious diseases like COVID 19, there could be falsification of such as witnessed in various climes of the world today; thereby endangering the lives of other members of the audience. This falsification of vaccine certificates was particularly high because of the many restrictions imposed on the unvaccinated and the consequent freedom that was attached to the vaccine cards (Novita and Mohammad 26).

Film adaptation offers individual audience's safer opportunities of seeing films – that is, adaptation of dramatic works or performances - from the comfort of their homes and where necessary with family and friends. This is particularly safe because people tend to be more honest about their health status with families and close relations, especially as they will be the ones to look after them in situations like lockdowns or severe sickness. In addition, the risk of sharing surfaces is highly mitigated as gadgets like televisions, laptops, etc. will not be frequently accessed by the viewers. This is in direct opposition to theatrical/dramatic performances where the audience are exposed to making contacts with many persons from their entry points at the box office where tickets are purchased mostly on sight, to their exit point where they might catch up with acquaintances on how the show went. These box offices, especially the ones with physical tickets verification exercises as obtainable in some theatres/performance venues often features crowds at entry and exit points mostly moments before the beginning of the show and close of it at odd hours when everyone is a hurry to get home at the quickest time possible. In a time of easy spread of contagious diseases, this could be classified as potential public risk.

Where these dramatic texts that are used to produce dramatic performances are adapted into films, interested persons would download such through the online platforms and where they are to pay per view without downloading options, they may opt for live streaming while paying through their credit cards or any other digital payment channel thus saving them the risks of physical contacts in the theatre. Attesting to the effectiveness of film cum film adaptation in the face of the pandemic, Henning-Thurau, Ravid and Sorenson observe that:

Although the film industry has witnessed many technological changes—the introduction of sound, color, the invention of television—digitalization, more than any of these others, has unleashed a radical transformation of the industry. It has changed not just the nature of production, but also the businesses of distribution and of exhibition. It has challenged decades-long industry rules and routines. COVID-19, if anything, has accelerated this transformation. When the pandemic kept people home, streaming services came to the rescue, providing audiences with filmed entertainment on their televisions, computers, tablets, and other digital devices (157).

Film adaptations based on dramatic texts do not remove the interactions and expression of audience views and opinion on such creative works which is usually part of theatre / dramatic performance experience.

Rather than the limited experience that is witnessed in dramatic performances due to the temporalness of drama, film adaptation expands the scope of experience. The audience in film adaptation is given an opportunity of extended experience as these films could be accessed severally by the audience giving them ample time of viewership and basis for more holistic and in-depth reviews and comments about the film. These reviews could be posted directly on the comment sections of these platforms or any other film review media, where other audience members who have seen same adaptations could access and assess them with requisite responses. In this sense, filmmakers mitigate the risk of re-transmission of COVID-19 as a result of the face-to-face interaction experience in theatres.

There is a need for collaboration between production companies, streaming platforms, and technology providers to facilitate the adaptation and distribution of dramatic texts into home-viewing films. An example of films such collaborations is seen in the adaptation of Nigeria's renowned playwright and Nobel Laureate, Wole Soyinka's play *Death and the King's Horseman* into a film *Elesin Oba: The King's Horseman* (2022) distributed by movie distribution giants, Netflix. Such partnerships can help ensure the availability of resources, expertise, and platforms needed to reach a wider audience. There is also the need to simulate the stage experience for the audience in the area of staging and ensuring that these dramatic and filmic adaptations still carry the verve of staging rather than the filmic location style where not there could be the shortcoming of less dynamism in ensuring that scenery are created to best fit the plot.

There is also a need for the development of defined technical guidelines for the adaptation process. Such a guideline will consider aspects such as camera setups, audio recording, and post-production techniques, and it will also put intentional efforts into optimising the home viewing experiences, and perhaps providing a means to bridge the gap of interactivity and provide a sense of community, virtually, among home movie viewers. Hence, the internet and filmic adaptation medium is not viewed as a distribution or "transmission" channel in the context of theater and new media convergence; rather, it is the performance's location and a creative medium. It's not only about making a stage show watchable online or in cinema; it's also about finding new theatrical contexts for production and presentation, as well as new artist-audience interactions (Kumar, Chaturvedi and Merhotra 3). It is essential to focus on capturing the essence and emotional impact of live performances in the filmed adaptations. Filming techniques capable of producing similar impacts should therefore be employed. Techniques such as close-ups, the introduction of innovative camera angles, and immersive sound design

to maintain audience engagement and connection with the performances should be employed. These guidelines should also take into consideration the need to respect the intellectual properties of playwrights, libretto writers and makers of theatre content. Remarkably, one of the biggest surprises of a study into streaming of theatrical performances for viewing by audiences outside the theatre was that, in almost all cases, audience members who saw the performance via a cinema broadcast were more enthusiastic about their experience than those who watched in person at the theatre. It is striking how in the event, when describing their feelings about the performance, cinemagoers felt significantly more emotionally engaged than they had expected. In addition, it was also discovered that this emotional investment was even more intense than that of in-person theatregoers. Far from offering an affectively thinned-out experience, the United Kingdom's National Theatre Live's maiden broadcast seemed to suggest that watching theatre through a screen could at times be even more engrossing than attending in person (Sullivan 110).

It is important to ensure that the adaptations do not alienate the core of the theatre's audience base. The technologies for producing and consuming these adaptations should therefore be accessible and affordable to theatre companies and theatregoers alike. Productive partnerships that can provide support and cushion the required costs or increase accessibility to enable widespread adoption of this approach should therefore be explored.

At the point when these adaptations are done, it is important to educate the audience on the need to adopt these adaptations. With the theatre, there is a certain aura that its audience derives from patronising it. Ibironke and Yacim explain aura to be the unique value derived from the theatre, which could be from the live viewing of performers performing in person (201). While it is important to use technology to make the home-viewing experience as similar in its offering of an immersive experience as much as possible, it is also essential to educate and inform audiences about the benefits and value of home-viewing adaptations; how they support the future of the arts whilst still mitigating the risk of contagious diseases. Once adopted, production companies must evolve competent marketing strategies, utilise digital platforms, and form partnerships with streaming services to maximise the reach and impact of home-viewing adaptations.

Beyond ensuring that the intellectual properties of theatre artists are not violated, all relevant ethics of the practice should be adhered to. Companies must ensure fair compensation for artists and performers involved in the adaptation process. Licensing agreements and revenue-sharing

models that protect the rights and interests of all stakeholders while fostering sustainability of the theatre industry should be developed. This would ensure that the adaptation receives an industry-wide level of acceptance. It also ensures that a feedback loop between artist and companies is created. It is important to accommodate the audience in this feedback process as their opinion matters. This feedback will help improve the quality and experience of home-viewing adaptations. However, beyond collecting feedback, intentional efforts should be put into ensuring that adaptation processes are refined based on audience satisfaction and preferences, ensuring continuous enhancement of the home-viewing experience.

As the world now lives in the post-covid era, it is important for production companies to consider integrating home-viewing adaptations into the long-term strategies of their theatre production companies, even beyond the context of contagious diseases. This approach offers a complementary option to live performances, providing the much-needed accessibility and flexibility to the diverse audiences that it attracts.

By implementing these recommendations, theatres, production companies, policymakers, and stakeholders can proactively adapt to the challenges posed by contagious diseases while continuing to engage audiences with the performing arts. Home-viewing adaptations can serve as a sustainable and resilient alternative that safeguards public health while nurturing the appreciation and support for theatrical performances.

Conclusion

Going back to the aim of this conceptual paper, it is possible and very necessary for dramatists to transform their delivery in light of the challenges posed by COVID-19 disruption. However, the transformation may not need to be seen as permanent change but as an innovative measure to ensure the healthy safety of audiences while awaiting emancipation from the grip of the pandemic on the world. People still want the experience of dramatic performances in theatre. Nonetheless, it is vital for practitioners of theatre and drama to realize that the old-time patterns of running their trade have irrevocably changed. This new era has brought, along with it, new challenges and realities, and the audience's health need to be prioritised to enable them to survive through adopting film adaptations.

This research paper has explored the adaptation of dramatic texts into home-viewing films as a proactive measure to prevent the spread of contagious diseases, with a particular focus on the context of COVID-19. The findings highlight the feasibility, challenges, and benefits of this

approach in mitigating risks while maintaining audience engagement with the theatre arts. The research emphasises the importance of collaboration between theatre practitioners, including play wrights production companies, streaming platforms, and technology providers. Such partnerships are crucial to facilitate the adaptation and distribution of dramatic texts into home-viewing films, ensuring the availability of resources and platforms needed to reach a wider audience.

Technical guidelines have been recommended to maintain the artistic integrity of live performances during the adaptation process. These guidelines include considerations for camera setups, audio recording, post-production techniques, and optimisation of the home-viewing experience. The research also emphasises the significance of capturing the essence and emotional impact of live performances in the filmed adaptations. Techniques such as close-ups, innovative camera angles, and immersive sound design can enhance audience engagement and connection with the performances.

Accessibility and affordability are also crucial factors to consider as it is essential to ensure that the necessary technologies for producing and consuming home-viewing adaptations are accessible and affordable for theatres, production companies, and audiences alike. Partnerships and initiatives that support reduced costs and increased accessibility are therefore recommended to drive widespread adoption of this approach. Campaigns and education outreach efforts are also essential to inform audiences about the benefits and value of home-viewing adaptations thereby promoting the importance of supporting the arts while also mitigating the risk of contagious diseases. It is also noted that there is a need to develop marketing strategies, and partnerships with streaming services that can maximise the reach and impact of home-viewing adaptations.

Considerations of cogent ethics such as intellectual property rights, and fair compensation for artists, playwrights and performers, should also be addressed while licensing agreements and revenue-sharing models must be established to protect the rights and interests of all stakeholders and foster the sustainability of this approach within the theatre industry. The research also emphasised the need for continuous improvement through feedback collection from audiences and artists to enhance the quality and experience of these home-viewing adaptations. Ultimately, the research advocates for the long-term integration of home-viewing adaptations into the strategies of theatre and film production companies, extending beyond the context of contagious diseases. Embracing this approach as a complementary option to live

performances provides greater accessibility and flexibility to diverse audiences as “films have become essential to the existence of Nigerians so much that even the government of the day has come to recognize so” (Joe, Anyira and Anyiam 9).

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