

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND FILM DISTRIBUTION IN KENYA

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DECLARATION

The project is my original work and has not been submitted for the award of a degree in any university.

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ABSTRACT

The twenty-first century is a decade of shifts. Since its onset, film as an offshoot of the twentieth century's technology and its impact is a recipient of its adjustment. Notably, alterations emanate from unending innovations that sway on its content, production and distribution. This proposition is made after a realisation of what the Third Industrial Revolution has done to Film technology, particularly, to its transition from analogue to digital modes. I argue that film-related businesses have been created with a parallel disruption of others. However, amidst all these changes, a marked boost on its precision in quality, accessibility as well as the democratisation of what viewers need has been noted. These observations are universal, nevertheless. In Kenya, I acknowledge that these shifts impact on the dissemination and consumption of film. It is these findings that narrows this study into two objectives: One, to examine how digital technology has impacted film distribution in Kenya and two, to investigate the impact of digital technologies on the exhibition of film in Kenya. As a result, the study hypothesised that in Kenya, digital technology impacts on both film distribution and exhibition. That is why, in probing on the aforesaid duo impacts, this study has employed Clayton Christensen's *Theory of Disruption of innovation* and Everett Rodgers' *Diffusion of Innovation* theories as frameworks of my debate. Among many findings, I argue that conventional film distribution business models have been replaced with modern ones because of their transformation potential.

Operational Terms

IMAX Theatres- Are high-resolution film screens with dome circular and huge plain screens that almost cover the entire theatre, with special sound engineers.

iGeneration- Are the generation born between the 1990s and 2000s and are the most technologically immense

7D Cinema Exhibition-New high tech video recreational products, combined both 3D AND 4D cinema exhibition innovation to cum up with virtual stimulation

Windows System - the chronological exploitation of motion picture in its stages of distribution in different platforms to maximise motion picture revenue during its lifetime

Digital Technology-is innovations that produce accumulate or synthesise data, in this paper is used to refer to the process of consumption of motion picture over different digital platforms such as social media, YouTube, and Phones.

Digitisation- is the process of converting analogue content into digital formats with electronic devices so that the information can be processed, stored, and transmitted through digital networks.

Distribution- This is the process of making a film available for exhibitions for the audience on different platforms of the display.

Digital Distribution- Involves the delivery of digital media content such as audio, videos, software, and e-books. In this paper, the term has been used as the distribution and exhibition of motion picture content over the internet.

VOD Video on Demand- are service providers that distribute and exhibit motion picture over the internet

HD Formats-These Are High Definition picture resolution, either 720p or 1080p. More lines of pictures depict a higher level of picture resolution.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

Reflecting from feudal to the industrial revolution in connection to distribution, I acknowledge that there has been an exponential shift of technology that cannot be underestimated – a change that is as a result of emergence, development, and prominence of digital innovation, more specifically in the global south. These innovations have brought about a marked change in the distribution of internet-based products. A study geared towards understanding the nature, function, and dynamics of today's distribution in film studies is integral. More integral when its focus is pegged on digitisation and distribution of motion pictures in the global south countries such as Kenya.

Digital technologies are particularly disruptive to existing businesses in view of the fact that they expand quickly. Moreover, they are agile enough to convert consumers into the new business model. Consequently, online video distribution is screen on the go, direct to the consumers, bypassing traditional mediums of distributors. This has elicited profound implications for conventional mediums of film distribution in the Kenyan film industry. For example, regular players in the delivery of films face elimination, as a result, fronting the question of technological disruption in the distribution of film in Kenya. Therefore, this study spins within the realms of technological disruption in the distribution of film in Kenya.

Distributors play a crucial role in the circulation and consumption of movies. For insistence, they promote and market films, through their acquisitions policies, thus, linking production with exhibitors in film value chain. In spite of this, importance of film dissemination,

it has received little academic research over the years. Moreover, Virginia Crips in her book *Film Distribution in the Digital Age: Pirates and Professionals (2015)* asserts that “film distribution has up until now attracted astonishingly little academic attention.” (1) Consequently, this study supplements the growing discourse on film distribution scholarship, through the lens of technological disruption in the country.

Nonetheless, distribution embodies a critical function of gate-keeping by connecting the structures of production and consumption through influencing what movies we get to see, where and when. For instance, Rodrick Smit, in his seminal work, *Gatekeeping in the Evolving Business of Independent Film (2019)* elucidates the importance of probing film distribution as:

It regulates the circulation of and access to films in both national and International markets... they exert control over processes of inclusion and exclusion, over the process of enabling access to some movies and disabling access to others... They are needed to deal with issues of oversupply and abundance of products in the cultural industries. (1-2)

To the same degree, it is the only stage where revenue is generated. Therefore, distribution regulates and circulates motion pictures for it to generate maximum revenue. In this study, I examine the importance of distribution, explore its vitality and how digital technologies have influenced it. In addition, digital revolution and evolution are being experienced in various sectors of the country's economy. For example, it has brought a paradigm shift in the country on how goods and services are being produced and disseminated. A phenomenon Bitange Ndemo and Tim Weiss opine in *Digital Kenya: An Entrepreneurial Revolution in the Making (2010)* as:

Digital innovations are destroying old ways of doing business, and smart young start-up entrepreneurs are at the forefront of this quiet but historical transformation. Teams of skilled developers and programmers have sprung up in innovation hubs, incubators, and accelerators across the country to build information and telecom solutions that capitalise on the country's mix of challenges and opportunities. (1)

Undeniably, the rapid expansion of the Information Communication Technology (ICT) sector has altered the country through connectivity and software applications hence disrupting businesses over the past decades. Furthermore, the film industry has not been immune to this radical makeover by digital innovations in the country. For instance, technological advancements such as broadband internet connection, video compression, streaming media and encryption have facilitated the transfer of movie files over the internet thereby enabling films to be digitized and to be disseminated over the internet platform. Consequently, this has ushered in e-commerce in the film industry in Kenya.

Michael Curtin, Jennifer Holt and Kevin Sanson in their book *Distribution Revolution: Conversations about the Digital Future of Film and Television (2014)* postulate that: “When looking to understand the current tumult in the media landscape, it is, therefore, clear that distribution networks and technologies are where the seeds of transformation have been sown.”

(2) In particular, traditional mediums of distribution of movies had to optimise their business owing to the digitization of film distribution that marginalizes their business models. Moreover, consumers’ habits of consumption of movies have transformed as well over the years. Indeed, digital innovations have revolutionised the dissemination of films by shifting movie screening from the big screen (Cinema Theatres) to the portable small screens (mobile phones, tablets and laptops) rendering traditional mediums of distribution obsolete.

Kevin Zhu in his article *Internet-based Distribution of Digital Videos: The Economic Impacts of Digitization on the Motion Picture Industry (2001)* acknowledge that:

Digital technologies not only have the potential to reduce the cost of the movie-making process but also have profound implications for the structural change of the entire industry. With the internet, movie producers and studios may bypass traditional distributors and

deliver movies directly to end consumers through new technologies such as video-on-demand. (273)

It is such revelation in the above quote, addition to digital distributions' capability of disrupting the value chain of film, by directly distributing to the consumers that is compelling the conventional channels of film distribution to restructure their business model to remain resilient in the market.

In addition, the government's investment in the infrastructure of the ICT sector through its vision 2030 flagship project has resulted in the internet boom in the country. For insistence, it has led to increased fibre connections to households and offices, resulting in the availability of mass broadband in the country, hence, aiding online video distribution in the country. Consequently, ushering in e-commerce in the dissemination of film in Kenya. This is manifested through the proliferation of video streaming sites (YouTube, Viusasa, Showmax, and Netflix) in recent years. Furthermore, digital mediums are formidable competitors for the traditional mediums of distribution, subsequently, leading to fragmentation of audience with many choices of films from too many channels on the online video distribution platforms.

Consequently, digital distribution operates in different business models from the traditional ones, thus, transforming the conventional mediums of distribution of motion pictures. It has also changed consumers *on how* and *where* they screen movies. Given that that is the position Kenyan films inhabits. Therefore, this study is an endeavour to underscore the impact of digitization on film distribution in Kenya. Fundamentally, this means coming to terms with the maxims of Disruptive Innovation and Diffusion of Innovation theories that I have used to expound on the phenomenon of digital distribution transformation, revolution, and evolution in Kenya. In addition,

I also acknowledge that the film distribution landscape in Kenya has undergone a radical transformation over the years creating uncertainty as well as glimmers of opportunity.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The study on digital technology and Film distribution in Kenyan is informed by the enormous change brought by digital technology in the distribution of film over the years. Kenya's film distribution and consumption have been based on traditional mediums (Television broadcast, cinema exhibition and DVD) consumption of movies. However, the arrival of digital technologies has brought up new mediums of film distribution that have influenced the consumption of film in Kenya. Subsequently, digitisation has brought about other avenues that are not only efficient and economical but also easily accessible to film consumers. Moreover, the study examines how digital technology has influenced the distribution and exhibition of films in Kenya.

1.3 Objectives

This study aims at achieving the following objectives:

- i To examine how digital innovations impact on the distribution of motion pictures in Kenya.
- ii To investigate the impact of digital technologies on the exhibition of film in Kenya.

1.4 Hypotheses

- i Digital technologies impact on the distribution of motion picture in Kenya
- ii Digital technologies influences exhibition of the motion picture in Kenya

1.5 Justification of the Study

The study interrogates the influence of digital technologies on film distribution and consumption in the country. For instance, the academic discourse that exists in the country, such as, Racheal Diang'a (2007), Kenya Film Commission (2011), Edwin Nyutho (2015), Esther Nguma (2015), David Ng'ang'a (2015), and Moses Wamalwa (2018) have all majored on the thematic and stylistic

issues facing film industry in the nation. Besides, these studies have not examined how digital technology is impacting the distribution of motion pictures that my study aims to research on.

In particular, this study seeks to add knowledge about how digital technology has impacted film distribution in the country, to the existing literature. Furthermore, it will also help relevant government authorities to come up with policies that will create an enabling environment for the digitisation of film distribution in the country. In other words, my study will benefit relevant Film authorities and stakeholders on how to develop a self-sustaining digitized local video distribution industry capable of employing thousands of young producers, actors, scriptwriters, storytellers, casting crew, videographers, and editors as well as being a foreign exchange earner. With regards to this study is critical because it contributes towards addressing the lacuna existing on the impact of the digital distribution motion picture in Kenya.

1.6 Scope and Limitation

The focus of research is to examine how digital innovations have impacted the distribution of films in Kenya. In particular, the study focuses on the distribution landscape in the country through mapping opportunities and challenges created by digital changes in distribution. Therefore, the study is limited to the distribution aspect of motion pictures in the country and objectives being sought by the study. Henceforth, to achieve the proposed objectives, my study will revolve around digital innovation and distribution of motion pictures in Kenya. In addition, other materials from the internet, YouTube and magazines will underscore and propel the proposed hypotheses into methodological, sound and justifiable conclusions.

1.7 Literature Review

Research into digital film distribution currently occurs in a period where digitisation is transforming traditional modes of film distribution and exhibition. For example, analogue

mediums of films are being fashioned from the margins of the theatrical space to a multitude of digital and non-theatrical arenas. In addition, the exhibition screens are being advanced from small screens (smartphones, tablets and laptops) to the large screen like IMAX Theatres screens (Are high-resolution film screens with dome circular and huge plain screens that almost cover the entire theatre) that are fitted with 3D,4D and 7D exhibition screens. The role of disruptive technologies is a persisting subject in the film industry, signifying radical shift that digitisation of distribution has brought. As a matter of fact, digital innovations have been the propelling force of revolution in the new millennium dispensation. Illustrated, through government policies, as well as popular cultures, are the hallmarks of digital technology as a vital force in the fourth industrial revolution dispensation, that is, the digital technological revolution. Given the profound transformation of digital technology in the country such as *Mpesa* in the Banking sector, *ODEL* Online Classes in the education sector, *Huduma Centers* in the government sector, and *Viusasa* in the entertainment sectors is an implication of the centrality of digital innovation as undeniably the driving force behind the accrued transformation in various sectors in the country. It is this viewpoint that I vindicate that digital innovations have impacted on film distribution in the country.

Consequently, distribution is the cornerstone of the motion picture industry, moreover, it is where producers are connected with consumers by functioning as a gatekeeper that determines which films we watch, where and when. The roles played by distribution, such as acquisition policies and marketing practices, play a crucial role in disseminating motion pictures by determining what the consumers get to see, thus, shaping our film culture, Therefore, distributors are influential gatekeepers, the critical lynch-pin that shapes our film culture through regulating what we watch, where, and when. This is what Ramon Labato in his dissertation *Sub-cinema: Mapping Informal Film Distribution 2009*) states that:

Thousands of features are produced each year, but only a small number of these will play to large audiences. Distributors, formal and informal, determine which films win and lose in this game of cultural consumption. In the process, they shape public culture by circulating or withholding texts which have the potential to become part of shared imaginaries, discourses, and dreams. (2)

Due to this fact, distributors play a vital role in the process of circulating film to the audience. They shape film culture by determining our access to films, creating demand for future production, and constructing our habits and taste. However, film distribution has been largely overlooked within the academic circle, which is quite problematic when we consider the importance of distribution in the value chain in the Film Industry.

The literature on Film Industry in Kenya has always been grounded on the perspectives of history, themes, and production aspects of films. Notwithstanding, the importance of film distribution, there is a lack of a coherent body of work on distribution, especially on how digital innovations have shaped film distribution. Clinical analysis of distributive issues in the film industry has been mainly left to trade press Newspapers in the country. Likewise, Ramon Lobato (2009), Ryley Grunewald (2013), Virginia Crisp (2015), and Lauren Carrol Harris (2017) aver that distribution is the least studied sector of the motion picture industry. A lacuna still exists in Kenya, between practices of motion picture distribution and their representation in scholarship.

Lobato highlights that the study of film distribution has received much traction from academics concentrating on consumption or reception studies (114). Since distribution from those studies is examined from the consumer perspective there is a need to research through the lens of technological distribution and its ramifications on global south countries like Kenya. Furthermore, the majority of research in film distribution has been grounded in quantitative research analysis. I am subjecting this study to qualitative textual and cultural analysis through the angle of

technological disruption. Nevertheless, distribution is a trading process, it carries out the film, cultural effects that impact the consumers, distributors, and exhibitors that quantitative analysis cannot account for. Henceforth, the study will assess how digital innovations transform the film consumption culture in Kenya. Examining distribution from this standpoint means coming to terms with technological disruption.

The advent of technological innovations has revolutionised the world through connectivity around the globe, breaking geographical barriers, making globalisation a reality, rapidly reducing the cost of goods and services. The internet has penetrated every corner of life, from entertainment to work and social interactions, profoundly, fueling the digital revolution. This has fundamentally transformed how we communicate, produce, and consume goods and services. Technological advancement in bandwidth enables the internet to stream motion picture contents. The availability of broadband internet paired with video compression technology has fueled the digitisation of movies in the country. Subsequently, the seeds of transformation by digital technologies have been sown in distribution as elucidated above. Undeniably, the film distribution landscape has undergone an absolute radical shift in the country; from the Cinema theatre distribution to DVD circulation and the tailor-made dissemination of movies through digital platforms.

However, these seismic shifts by digital innovations have created uncertainty as well as waves of opportunity. Screen Australia in *Issues in Feature Film Distribution* 2015) observes that:

These changes are affecting the industry globally, impacting not only on Hollywood studios but also on distributors, sales agents, exhibitors, home video retailers, and small independent producers. While no one in the industry is immune, this new fragmenting distribution landscape poses a particular and acute challenge for independent films and those engaged in their production and distribution worldwide. (4)

Given that this is the challenge that Kenyan film industry is tackling, an examination of the impact of the internet on distribution will help in mapping out the opportunities and challenges of the digital distribution landscape in Kenya. The mushrooming of third party applications whose business models rest on disseminating movies to the small screen (smartphones) to continue circulating films on the go has led to audience fragmentation with an abundance of choices of movies from numerous channels of distributions to choose from.

Whereas, traditional distribution mediums (film theatres, DVDs, and broadcast Television) are restricted in the number of motion pictures they can exhibit and the size of consumers they can access, digital distribution platforms face neither limitation. They can exhibit to large consumers from their giant repository of movie catalogue as long as one is connected to the internet. This boosts the dwelling consumption and distribution of motion pictures in the traditional mediums of distribution. For example, the need to buy physical DVDs has been drastically reduced by digital innovations, this has threatened movie shop distributors with elimination in the country. However, the abundance of film content on the digital channels has led to an oversupply of film in the Kenyan market. It has also increased piracy on the internet as postulated by KPMG report in *Content Security and Digital Distribution in the Motion Picture, Music, and Publishing Industries 2017*) that

Most pirates worldwide depend on the internet for acquiring and distributing illegal content. Widespread piracy began concurrently with the emergence of the internet as a medium for free and uncontrolled global interactivity—and the industries affected by this sea change are scrambling to redefine their businesses. (2)

The above quote is an illustration of how digitisation has disrupted distribution business models by democratising piracy. Furthermore, film distribution over the years has relied on a sequential release pattern (windowing) to generate maximum revenue in the different windows by making

film content available in different markets for a specific time. It has also minimized film piracy. Designed by Hollywood, it has been the principal method of film distribution over the years. It enables the film to be accessed in various ways such as through the cinema, television broadcast, and DVD rental in chronological order, allowing film distributors to discriminate prices in different platforms of the exhibition of the motion picture. However, digital innovations have disrupted the windowing models, through bypassing the chronological order of distribution direct to consumers in the process democratising piracy.

Lauren Carrol Harris in her PhD dissertation *Theorising the Cultural Impacts of Film Distribution in the cinema and Beyond* (2017) highlights that beyond the Hollywood model of distribution (window system), there is an enormous variation from country to country. That, critically impacts on each country's national motion picture industry and various film culture. (22). Kenya has diverse distribution methods of films. It is informal, as a result of lack of cinema theatres in most parts of the country. Poor marketing has also had negative impacts on film distribution in the country, leading to informal distribution methods like self-distribution and piracy. Indeed, exploring distribution through the lens of digital innovations opens up a new perspective on the Kenyan film industry that has not yet been fully explored in academic circles.

The context of film distribution in Africa can be explored through the approach of colonization in Africa countries. Current film distribution practice has its roots in social, political, and economic conditions as a result of the colonization of Kenya by the British. Cinema theatres are concentrated on major urban centers in the country since the cinema theatres were for the white audience only. Lobato underscores this fact that:

Any discussion of African film culture: the history of cinema in Africa is indivisible from the history of colonialism. The film has functioned over the years as a vehicle for

propaganda, a signifier of Western modernity, and a status symbol for whites in Africa, but rarely has it been a means of communication between black Africans (171)

Cinema-going was, and still is, an elite practice in Kenya manifested by concentration of Cinema theatres in the major urban cities, as planned by the whites. This has resulted to ineffective distribution of film, especially through theatrical release.

Moreover, Kenyan film industry is based on direct-to-video release as the first line of film distribution. While the theatrical release is limited due to lack of cinema theatres in most parts of the country, the majority of cinema theatres are reluctant to exhibit local films titles in cinema theatres. This has led to the rise of informal distribution in the country, based on the piracy trading routes to reach film consumers. This has been popularised by the DVD innovation as a major medium for circulation of movies in the country. The routes through which films are disseminated to the consumers in Kenya are sophisticated and informal. Though trading routes are not efficient as examined by Kenya Film Commission, *Audience Consumer Trends Survey Report (2012)* and Ministry of Sports, Culture and The Arts in its *National Film Policy (2015)* echoes that the major impediment to film industry in Kenya is poor marketing, and lack of proper distribution channels. In this study, I have fielded this gap through the angle of technological disruption. Mapping out barriers as well as the opportunities created by the digital innovations in the dissemination of films.

From the aforementioned discussion, I observe that Kenya's motion picture distribution model is grounded on informal distribution channels, predominantly through DVDs and television broadcast with limited theatre release. These traditional channels have been the fulcrum of the business model of distribution over the years. The theatrical release is almost nonexistent in Kenya due to the lack of cinema in most parts of the country. I observed that the informal nature of distribution has resulted in an increase in piracy as a result of digitisation of distribution.

The motivation for this study is the profound radical shift by the digital innovation in the country over the past years. In the film industry, digital innovations have radically transformed how we screen movies. Smartphones, as well as improved affordable broadband internet available in the country. Expanding the consumption for home Video in both time and space. Digital distribution platforms have quickly become the leading market for the distribution of films. Consequently, traditional channels such as DVD, Cinema Exhibition, and Television Broadcast have been marginalised by digital distribution. As Gausta Terje in *How streaming services make cinema more important* (2019) acknowledges that:

These disruptive shifts not only affect the distribution market channels but have significant ripple effects across the whole audio-visual value system on producers with talent and crew on the other end. The new channels operate with different business models from the old ones, so, when viewership moves from one to another, the change is felt economically by content providers. (68)

Gaustad's comments illustrate that digital innovations are transforming consumers, not only how to watch movies but also what the audience consumes. Mapping out these impacts of digital innovations in distribution will be vital in understanding how digital technologies are impacting on film distribution in Kenya. The influx and the increasing use of VODs services like Viusasa, Netflix, Showmax, and YouTube is a manifestation of how digital technology has influenced the distribution of films in Kenya over the years. The internet transformation is manifested in Kenya through mobile phone applications that are becoming part of many Kenyans as a source of receiving, disseminating, and exhibiting film content, leading to the evolution of online habits that is a threat to direct video release in Kenya.

Lobato asserts that film distribution is difficult and unglamorous to research since few people outside the industry know much about how it works in practice. While existing academics

on motion picture distribution are scattered across a variety of disciplines that has its technical language, film distribution, he says, is the least theorized in the motion picture industry. (25) This validates the lack of a coherent study in the distribution of film in Kenya. An inquiry made by the Ministry of Sports, Culture, and the Arts in its *National Film Policy* (2015) highlights that the major impediment to the Kenyan film industry is the lack of structured marketing and distribution channels in the Film Industry (16). These can be attributed to a lack of formal and non-theatrical distribution practices not being theoretically codified in Kenya.

Furthermore, digitisation of distribution has led to an increase in the consumption of motion pictures on the online video distribution channels. This is manifested in Kenya by the audience switching to digital platforms as the primary source of film consumption. A survey by Social Media Lab Africa (SIMELab) establish that 51.2% of Kenyans spend more than three hours on YouTube daily as a source of disseminating motion picture content to them (SIMELab 16). This is an indication of the shifting trend of consumers towards the digital platforms of the exhibition at the expense of the traditional channels of the exhibition of movies, thus, prompting this study to analyse ramification of digital technologies on film. Despite Kenya being a digital hub for digital innovations from *Mpesa* services in the financial sector to *Viusasa* in the entertainment sector. There is still a lack of research that directly examines the impact of digital innovations in the distribution of movies in Kenya that this thesis aims to achieve.

The current literature in Motion Picture in Kenya tends to focus almost exclusively on thematic, and stylistic aspects of film. *Rachael Diang'a* (2005), *Edwin Nyutho* (2015), *Esther Nguma* (2015) and *Wasike Wamalwa* (2018) have examined Kenyan film through the lens of the thematic and stylistic aspects of the film in Kenya. There is a lack of coherent research in Kenya that directly examines the nature of the relationship between digital innovation and film

distribution. Nyutho evaluates Kenyan film from its historical foundations and tries to fill the gap of shortage of data on the history of film in Kenya. The research outlines how the industry has developed and how policies were made to suit regimes in power. A surprising finding is the extent to which South Africa has risen to dominate cinema in Kenya since the end of Apartheid. Nguma (2015) sought to identify the approaches to energizing the motion picture in Kenya. The study found out the major inhibiting factors in the film industry are: poor government policies towards the film industry, leading to an influx of foreign cheap pirated films in the Kenyan market. Kirui (2017) sought to assess the impact of media digitisation on local video production. The study aimed to evaluate the impact of media digitisation on diversity in the content generation of local video production and to assess the extent to which digitisation has attracted the audience to local video production. The main findings show that media digitisation has made it easier for local video productions to be generated. On the other hand, the Kenyan viewers consume local video productions more on the digital platform services and Video On Demand than on the mainstream TV channels. In response to the above finding, it is true that digital innovations have impacted on film distribution, moreover there is still a gap that exists how it has especially affected dissemination of film in the country. With increase in the use of internet platforms to circulate and consume movies, thus, this research will address the lacuna through qualitative analysis of relevant data on film distribution to address the gap.

Research by Media Council of Kenya on *The Impact of Digital Technologies and Internet on Media* discovers that access to digital innovations and mobile headset applications with their popularity in Kenya has influenced mass media production, distribution, exhibition, and consumption leading to indigenous mass media to bow to digital innovations as they fight to generate income and to remain relevant (8). I concur, with findings research, however it fails to

take to account how film industry has been affected, especially in the distribution sector of film, that has been impacted by digital innovations, thus this study aims to fill the lacuna that exists how digital technologies has impacted film distribution through the lens of technological disruption.

There is still a lack of examination on the impact of digital technologies on the distribution of films in Kenya, as indicated by the literature. The use of DVD distribution that has been the principal of distribution in Kenya is gradually being faced out by digital distribution channels. This has been attributed to the high rate of internet penetration in Kenya. Traditional distribution channels such as the television broadcast are launching mobile applications to leverage digital technologies. Citizen Kenyan has come up with *Viusasa* to disseminate local video motion picture content digitally. The motivation for this thesis project is the sizeable unmapped distribution mediums, in both informal and formal distribution channels. The rise of mobile applications has advanced circulation of film on the go such as Viusasa, YouTube and Vimeo, and the popularity of both illegal and legal streaming sites such as Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon; and illegal file-sharing sites such as BitTorrent software such as pirate bay has offered alternative film distribution and exhibition for film producers altering the idea of what film distribution is, and transforming the distribution landscape of film in Kenya as I have mapped out.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The thesis employs Disruptions of Innovation theory and Diffusion of innovation theory. What interests this discussion is how they expound on digital innovations. The two theories are instrumental in advancing on the 'how' proposed by my problematised hypothesis. In particular, Theory of Disruption of Innovation is critical in examining how internet innovation has influences on the distribution of motion picture in Kenya. On the other hand, the Theory of Diffusion

Innovation will be employed to seek how the dynamics of the exhibition have influenced digitisation.

The arena of disruptive innovation literature has been established by the works of Clayton Christensen, in his book *The Inventor Dilemma* (1997) he expounds on the disruptive innovation theory. Subsequently, the theory has been developing with numerous testing frameworks in various fields (Assink 2006, Charitou and Markides 2003, Christensen and Overdorf 2000, and Christensen et al. 2008). With rapid development in digital technologies (Broadband, Internet of Things, Algorithmic, and Artificial Intelligence), people are shifting towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution, embodied by digitisation. These digital innovations are characterized by the potential to disrupt industries by revolutionizing entire value chain production and distribution of goods and services. In light of this, the concept of disruptive innovation has received considerable attention from both practitioners and scholars, making it a buzzword. I employ Reimer et al. definition of disruption as “Advancements in digital technologies that occur at space and magnitude that disrupt established ways of creating value within and across markets, social interactions, and more generally, our understanding and thinking” (4). In the present day, digital disruption is accredited as a threat in most businesses. Facebook, YouTube, Netflix, and Showmax have revolutionised the distribution of motion picture in Kenya with many traditional channels of distribution leveraging on the digitisation rather than being disrupted.

As the definition illustrates, the perception of digital disruption stems from the lens of disruptive innovation theory. However, Disruption innovation has been extensively misunderstood and erroneously applied, as highlighted by Christensen in an interview with Harvard *Business Review*. He said:

I never thought ... that the word *disruption* has so many connotations in the English language, that people would then flexibly take an idea, twist it, and use it to justify whatever they wanted to do in the first place. (King and Baatartogkh78)

So, what is the right way to apply the theory of disruption of innovation? I decided to examine this question through the analytical lens of the tenets of theory disruption that manifest itself in twofold: disruption and sustaining innovation. Giedrius Steimants defines disruptive innovation as:

A successfully commercialised new product, service, or business model that involves new technologies, from new markets that were not there before or transform the existing ones as well as form new consumption patterns by offering consumers substantially enhanced benefits and disrupts markets, critical players. (11)

This study is going to apply the definition above to critically analyse the impact of digital technologies on film distribution in Kenya. Digital innovations have created a new market of distribution revolutionizing the traditional market through substantially enhanced services that are convenient and affordable. Disruptive innovation constructs an entirely new business characterised by low prices for goods and services.

While sustaining innovation Ian Christensen et al define as:

Evolutionary improvements of established technologies or technological breakthroughs (also known as “revolutions”) that raise the level of product performance, thereby meeting demands of the most demanding customers and allowing premium pricing and profit margins. This type of innovation can be introduced by a new entrant or incumbent firms (3)

I employ this definition of sustaining innovation in analysing how traditional mediums of film distribution are leveraging on digital technologies to remain resilient in the market. Traditional businesses find it quite hard to transform and cope with disruptive innovations. Failure to address the disruption by the incumbent business has resulted in cannibalisation by the disruptors. Cinema theatres, television broadcast, and DVD distributors have been forced to close their business as a result of digital disruption in Kenya over the years. While others have remained in the business,

leveraging on digital innovations ((sustaining innovation) to remain competitive. Sustaining innovations tend to target high-end customers with better performance than was previously available. Cinema Theatre exhibitions have had to digitize their theatre cinemas with the state of the art innovations in an exhibition, such as 3D screens, with enhanced audio systems, to remain competitive in the market.

Disruptive innovation tends to alter the market to a very different value of proportion than had been available before, in most cases, disruptive technologies or innovation inhibit the growth of popular products in mainstream markets because of the low-priced, easy to use, smaller and suitable to use. (Christensen,11). They disrupt the market through new goods and services that are cheap, simple to use, convenient, and appealing to consumers. Once the disruptive goods and services get a foothold in the market, the enhancement sequence begins, as is the case of Online Video Distribution in the country. It started its appeals to the millennial generation providing new ways of watching film on different screens. Later it gained foothold in the market displacing the traditional mediums of distribution. As a result of technological advancement in video compression and broadband internet facilitating streaming of videos with better quality films compared to traditional mediums this has rendered traditional medium to look obsolete.

Though disruption of innovation has gained widespread acceptance among business managers becoming part of the business lexicon (Christensen et al.,3), the theory has been criticized due to ambiguity in its definition, its extrapolative nature, and lack of quantitative data to back up the theory. (Dannells 2004, King and Baatartogtok 2015, Lepore 2014 and Sood and Tellis 2011). In his justification of the theory, Christensen (2006) defended the theory that lack of numerical data to support the theory is as a result of the blunt measures used in statistical analysis. He further states that the theory is still under development (38).

Christensen further discredits disruptive innovation theory as both consumer and business model based, what Sood and Tellis in their article “Demystifying Disruption; A new model for understanding and Predicting Disruptive Technologies (2011) disagree with. They believe that disruptive innovation theory bases its claim on inadequate empirical evidence, (339). That is contentious because it fails to thoroughly debunk the strength betoken disruptive innovation, therefore, the proposed theory manifests itself in the realm of motion picture invention with these segments venturing into the discursive context of technology. Thus, Disruptive Innovation theory will be vital in examining how digital technology has impacted the distribution of motion pictures, as innovations are replacing traditional distribution channels in Kenya.

Technological Inventions have the capabilities to restructure the production and distribution of goods and services of a product. It has the potential to obsolete labour and assets of a business in the market (Sood and Tellis 339). For Example, the invention of the motion picture in 1850 made the live theatre industry to look obsolete. In Motion picture advancement, development, and evolution, each new technological innovation has made the incumbent look outdated. The invention of video technology outdated the film technology by transforming, modifying, and altering how the motion picture is produced, distributed, and exhibited to date.

DVDs innovation in distribution lead to the growth of Motion Picture Industry in many global south countries like Nollywood in Nigeria and Riverwood in Kenya. However, the mushrooming of online video distribution mediums has led to the increasing decline of DVD consumption in the country hence threatening closure of movie distribution businesses in the country. Therefore, disruption of innovation theory will help in examining this phenomenon (Declination of DVD consumption) in Kenya. Disruptive Innovation theory is critical in this study as it will help the researcher to examine the ramifications of digitisation of the distribution of

motion pictures in Kenya. The theory is vital, especially in the era of the digital revolution that is transforming how the consumers receive and exhibit motion pictures in numerous different platforms. As Christensen and his co-authors have alluded that to make Disruption Innovation a more robust theory, it needs to be tested in a wide area of disciplines. Which my thesis aims to achieve.

Diffusion of Innovation theory will be the other theoretical grid that will be important in the study. The process of adoption of innovations has been researched by various theorists, one of the most popular adoption model is by Everest Rogers in his book, *Diffusion of Innovation (2003)*. Sahin Ismail (2006) postulated that Diffusion of Innovation theory is widely used as a theoretical framework in the area of technology diffusion and adoption (1). Thus, this theory will be vital to how digital distribution spreads and its impacts on the film industry as distributors and consumers adopt it. The theory is appropriate for investigating the adoption of digital distribution by traditional mediums of distribution in the face of intense disruption by digital technologies.

Diffusion is a process by which an innovation is communicated through specific channels over time among the members of a social system as described by Everett Rodgers. It is a particular type of communication, in that the messages are concerned with new ideas. (5) It is a means of engaging in behavioural science research, especially concerning technological changes. Rogers further asserts that "Diffusion is a particular type of communication, in which the messages are about a new idea. This newness of the idea in the message content gives diffusion of Innovation its unique character. The newness means that some degree of uncertainty is involved in diffusion." (6) The word diffusion, in theory, is synonymous to either planned or unplanned spread of new ideas.

Rogers underscores the fact that “A technological innovation embodies information and thus reduces uncertainty about cause-effect relationships in problem-solving.” (6) As Puspasari and Mahmud substantiate that indeed diffusion innovation in the motion picture industry was a yardstick in determining how far the process of technology dissemination reach the public (29). With the intense revolution of digital technologies in the distribution of motion pictures, diffusion of innovation will aid in investigating how consumers, distributors, and exhibitors are adopting the innovation to be relevant in the market through the tenant of reinvention.

The diffusion of innovation theory involves a valuable modification model for guiding technological innovations, as the innovation is adapted and accessible to new adapters that cut across all levels. It symbolises the progression that arises as people embrace new concepts, products and drills (Kaminski, 1). As innovation is adopted, it tends to create opportunities and challenges to business models as businesses modify the innovation to remain competitive in the market. In Kenya, distributors and exhibitors are reinventing digital technologies to leverage the digital technologies as a form of reaction to disruption by the digital distribution of films in a process called reinvention.

According to Rogers, mass media are more effective means of creating information on inventions. Personal channels help in developing and altering attitudes towards innovation. Individual members of society are characterized as inventors; the primary majority are the first adopters; last adopters of the innovation are the laggards. Potential adopters acquire about the technology enquire about the benefits of using the technology; then, they resolve to reject or adopt the innovation. (22). While reinvention plays a role in further dissemination of innovation. Kee notes that reinvention occurs as a result of innovations packed in discrete components leading

users to adopt some components and modify or ignore others that come with the innovation (9). It occurs in both the innovation and the adopters.

The probability of adoption of innovation is based on the degree of individual innovativeness. A favorable attitude created towards innovations will lead to the adoption of that particular innovation, but if it is rejected, then that innovation is discontinued. In Kenya, the adoption of innovations brought about by digitisation such as DVDs, digital migration, VoDs has been gradual. Diffusion of Innovation theory will help in the study to explain the spread and the digital growth innovations in a distribution motion picture in Kenya, its effects, the challenges and opportunities it poses as it spread to various parts of the country. Diffusion of Innovation theory is vital in the investigation of how the digitisation of distribution is influencing the mediums of exhibitions of the motion picture.

1.9 Research Methodology

This study takes an economical and cultural lens to exemplify how digital technologies are impacting the conventional models of distribution of motion picture in Kenya through mapping out findings derived from a combination of scholarly books, newspaper articles, policy analysis, archival research, and Interviews. Trade Editorials and newspaper articles provide me with vital data for developing an understanding of how digital technologies are changing the distribution of films in Kenya. Online Articles and newspapers editorials Such *the East African*, *Business Daily*, *The Standard Newspaper*, and *Daily Nation* were fundamental in illustrating how digital technologies are shaping film distribution in Kenya.

For this reason, qualitative research was identified as a research methodology. Its exploratory nature will enable me to capture the complexity of film distribution. Interviews were also undertaken with film practitioners to collect data on the realities and experiences of the

upshots of digitisation on distribution of motion picture in Kenya. A close analysis of Articles on Newspapers such as *The Nation* and *The Standard*, and media digital platforms archival have been used to analyse how digital mediums of distribution such as YouTube, Netflix, and Viusasa are impacting on the distribution of motion picture in Kenya. The Theory of Diffusion of innovation will also help to examine the upshots of digitisation as the adaptation of the digitisation continue to spread to a different parts of the country. It will explore how the adaptation of innovation in exhibition spread out. Film distributors and producers were interviewed to solicit information that helps to enhance further scholarly penetration, on how digitisation has impacted on their mediums of the exhibition and distribution. Moreover, premises from the chosen theories will aid in structuring the most appropriate research questions salient in testing the proposed hypotheses

CHAPTER TWO

IMPACT OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES ON KENYA'S FILM DISTRIBUTION

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I study the impacts of digital innovation in the dissemination of motion pictures in Kenya. Therefore, I seek to highlight how digitization is transforming the distribution of the film business. I note that, until recently, the conventional rules of distribution of motion pictures has been based on the traditional mediums (Television, Cinema Release and DVD consumption). A recent development in technologies such as broadband internet and associated avenues that can digitally disseminate film in digital platforms have revolutionized film dissemination in Kenya.

Theoretically, the work of Clayton Christensen will be seminal in probing the transformation of digital technology. For this reason, I will employ *Disruption of Innovation* theory as a process where innovations are changing how goods and services are produced and how such development poses a potential threat to the incumbents, or rather the traditional types of film distribution in the country. It will help to expound on how digital disruption in the film industry has transformed the distribution landscape in Kenya. Other than Christensen's cadre, Everest Rodger's work, *Diffusion of Innovation* will be consequential in the assessment of how slow and often unanticipated painful adoption of innovations transform the organizational operations. His work will be seminal in delving into how the digital distribution of the film is being diffused. And how it is transforming the film distribution landscape in the country. In extension to aforesaid entries, I examine the impact of digital distribution on film through the historical lenses of film distribution in the country.

2.1 Distribution at the backdrop of Kenya's film industry

In a general sense, distribution denotes the spreading of product or information in a cross given geographical area. For Example, a Laptops distribution begins at the end of its production. It encompasses all those events that are required to facilitate the purchase such as importation, payment of taxes and duties to advertising and marketing of the laptop. Film Distribution takes on some of these general characteristics of commodity distribution with its specific features to the film industry. I employ Ramon Labato's definition of distribution as the "process that moves media through time and space" (2). Applying this definition allows me to examine distribution through the lens of social consequence because of its cultural power of regulating what movies consume.

The cultural power of film distribution can be analyzed through the arrival of film in Kenya. That can be traced back to the colonial discourse. Nicodemus Okioma and John Mugubi elucidate in their article *Film making in Kenya: The Voyage* that indeed;

The landing of the film camera on the Kenyan soil marked a radical shift in the social and cultural structure of Kenya's society. One far off boundaries and geographical phenomena were bridged, as vividly captured and reproduced on celluloid through the lens. Social and political structures were bent at best and broken at worst with the introduction of cinema. Being a social event happening in a confined environment that was to be paid for in advance introduced a commercial and reclusive aspect in leisure and entertainment hitherto free, communal, and utilitarian in the African context. (46)

As espoused above, the duo maintains that the invention of the cinema occurred at the moment when western countries were on the verge of consolidating their colonial expansion. That is why, from portioning and logistical setups, they (colonizers) built cinema theatre halls in urban centers for the sake of the white audience. The result was that; they could now disseminate and circulate any movie that was produced in their native homeland. Consequently, major cinema film theatres

are found in urban areas. Today, significant foreign titles have flooded film industry with a parallel scarcity of indigenous titles in theatre release.

Further, on the backdrop of film distribution in Kenya, I explore the post-independence period as a juncture when film was marked by high cinema theatre attendance. In other words, this is the moment when the natives who lived in urban areas were attending the cinema theatre. In a study conducted by Kenya Film Commission, this period marked a situation whereby “urban families would go out and watch the latest release foreign movies yet this period there were few or no local production that was screened in these theatres” (11). This can be attributed to expensive equipment needed for the production of movies by the natives while cinema distributions were controlled by foreigners, thus, regulating which film to be screened. Nyutho observed that Documentary Film Unit was created in 1966 after independence in the Ministry of Information and Communication. Due to lack of personnel the production equipment stayed for many years unutilized (86) leading to the absence of indigenous film titles in the cinema theatres.

As a consequence, the nonexistence of native titles in the cinema theatres resulted in the influx of Hollywood film into Kenya’s market. It later manifested into a situation where distributors profited through exhibiting foreign films because they were cheap, readily available and in high demand. This occurrence is described by Emmanuel Sama in his work title *Africans Films Are Foreigners in their own Countries (1974)* as a characteristic of a paradox whereby “African films being foreigners in their own countries” (54). The ramification was an ineffective distribution of the indigenous film in Cinema theatres in Kenya during the post-independence era. Qualitatively, in his study of how the film could sell, Ramon Lobato reaffirms the phenomenon as “African films accounted for less than 0.1 percent titles screened in Africa by mid-1990” (172).

Nevertheless, during the post-independence period, Television broadcast became a major distribution channel for local products such as *Mlevi* and *Tausi*.

From another branch of film distribution across the ages, Samantha Mea Simon in her thesis on *Technological Disruption in Entertainment: Navigating The Film Industry's Dynamic Relationship to The Consumer (2017)* observes that “The innovation of Video Home System (VHS) by Victor Company of Japan in 1976 transformed the film industry immensely by giving the audience control that they did not have with a theatrical or live broadcast in television such as re-watching, pausing, or fast-forwarding. Indeed, this is an experience that the viewers did not have before.” (35). In this way, the film industry shifted towards video home distribution that changes the shape of film culture modifying mediums of screening, permitting replay culture and privatization of consumption of film. Thus, Home Video Distribution by VHS and later DVD propelled the domestic film culture of consumption of movies in the country as well as raised new copyright questions in the film industry.

Therefore, VHS improved services it was offering such pause, rewind and forward, making it a staple device in people's homes, thus, opening new avenues of movie distribution through the Video rental shops. The implication was the slow decline of cinema attendance in Kenya. Moreover, the technological enhancement of VHS tapes led to the development of Digital Video Disc(DVD). As concluded by Sylvie Castonguay in her article *50 Years of Video Cassette Recorder* that:

By 2003 DVD sales had overtaken those of the VCR, signaling the dying days of magnetic tape. Video rental shops, sensitive to market trends, switched to DVD, accelerating the demise of the VCR. And so it continues, as providers of the latest digital video recorders, of film streaming to mobile telephones and of other new technologies tumble over each other to offer consumers even more options. Nor have all related copyright issues been resolved. The digital revolution of communications media will continue to pose new challenges for copyright. Complex questions ranging from the use of digital rights management to the

exceptions and limitations that define fair use of copyrighted works, continue to fuel international debate in policy and legal norm-setting fora, so contributing to the ongoing evolution of copyright law and practice. (Castonguay)

This ushered in an epoch of digitization of distribution of movies around the world through DVD hence creating a DVD distribution market of movies in the country that currently, the Home Video market in Kenya inhabit, as a major avenue of motion picture dissemination to the audience over the years.

2.2 Fast-Forward to Home Video Digital Video Disc (DVD) Distribution

Digital Video Disc (DVD) is much more than technology. It is part of Kenyan film culture of digitisation of movie dissemination. It has revolutionised as well as evolution Kenyan film distribution landscape. It's rapid diffusion and adoption in the country is what Adam Sherwin illustrates as;

The DVD, the fastest-adopted electronic consumer product at its commercial introduction in 1998, became the film studios' biggest cash generator, funding a screen production boom. The industry generated \$14bn (£9bn) by 2004, with more than 250m discs sold each year in the UK. Broadcasters shared in the windfall as living room shelves groaned under the weight of multimillion pound-selling TV box sets of *The Sopranos*, *The Wire* and *The Office*. Your DVD collection revealed as much about your personality as those neglected vinyl LPs, left to moulder in the attic, once did. (Sherwin)

The above quote vividly illustrates how the DVD has transformed the consumption of motion pictures over the years. Indeed, Ian Hoffmann in his article, *Social inclusivity, cultural diversity and online film Consumption*, affirms that "unlike other innovations that struggle to diffuse in the market, the rapid adoption and diffusion of DVD earned its reputation as the fastest-growing media for distributing motion pictures around the world" (162). Nonetheless, unlike VHS and VCR tapes, the DVD information storage is entirely digital accommodating smaller, lighter and more compressed medium. This enables its spread faster cannibalizing the VCR tapes in the market.

Moreover, Hoffmann notes that “Digital Video Disc, is the most successful carrier medium in moving image in history, introduced only in 1997; the DVD has managed to become the most influential and innovative platform for the moving image.” (161) True to the observation of Hoffmann, DVD Technology has become a staple medium of film dissemination in Kenya. The DVD innovation had advantages, such as higher durability, interactive special features and sharper resolution images. These features made it to spread and adopted by film consumers in the country. Moreover, it created private atmosphere for screening of movies, that is, the ability to watch a movie in the laptop or personal computers yourself. Consequently, the reply culture has offered the audience's opportunity for intense re-engagement with film text through the playback variable's such as pausing, rewinding, and forwarding afforded to the audience leading to film consumers to open up to DVD distribution, hence, explaining why it diffuses very first in the country.

Nyutho acknowledges that DVDs distribution gave families a platform to screen movies of their choice, without going to cinema theatre halls, which led to a drastic fall of theatre attendance, leading to the closure of many cinema houses in Kenya (170). This was coupled up with technological enhancement of DVD to Blue-ray Disc that has more than the five-time storage capacity of DVD. Its ability to screen high-definition video attracted Kenyan movie audience, especially, the middle-class who used to be a primary audience in the Cinema theatre halls.

Moreover, in the discourse of the distribution landscape in Kenya, DVD led to the creation of the distribution medium (direct to video release) in the home video market in the country prompting structural changes in the Kenya Film industry through the creation of Home Video distribution market in the country. It was characterised by direct to video release as the first line of the film release. The routes through movies travel to consumers were complex and informal, but efficient, since the networks evolved from circuits occupied with illegal distribution of foreign

movies bootlegs located in River road street in Nairobi. It created thousands of informal video parlours exhibition (*Video Vibanda Shops*) around the country over the years. DVD also contributed to the rise of film piracy, it was easy to purchase and copy to several other DVDs to distribute later.

Furthermore, the technological enhancement of DVD to Blue Ray DVDs has increased the number of movies from one to several movies. You had to only pay for one Blue Ray DVD and get several movies you could watch at your home unlike television and cinema theatres; propelling DVD distribution to become principal delivery method in the Home Video.

Ng'ang'a in his thesis titled *Demand for locally produced Films by Residents of Nairobi County, Kenya, (2015)* established that:

The film industry in Kenya is synonymous with the low number of movie cinemas, with the majority located in Nairobi. Other major urban centers and distribution outlets in Kenya is relatively weak, with Kenyans diminishing appetite to go and watch movies in the cinema.
(4)

The small number of cinema theatre halls is a manifestation of cannibalization of DVD distribution in cinema theatres distribution, which translates to the decline of theatrical release and exhibition in Kenya.

The upshot of DVD revolution was the drastic decline of cinema attendance, with an increase in DVD circulation and consumption among the audience. This compelled many cinema halls to close, such as *Kenya Cinema, Globe Cinema, Odeon Cinema, Shan Cinema, and Nu Metro*. A process Clayton Christened posits as disruptive innovation where “an innovation come up with new goods and services that eliminate the traditional goods and services with time, as a result of its affordability and price” (11). The new services offered by the DVD such as privacy screening

of movies, ability to rewind, forward and pause as well as its availability led to its adoption and diffusion in the country.

These factors propel DVD adoption and diffusion at the cost of theatre distribution, finally, cannibalizing cinema theatre distribution and exhibition in Kenya through the closure of some cinema theatres halls in Kenya. Furthermore, DVD innovation has become the linchpin of Kenya's distribution of movies over the years. It has also increased piracy in the country, the digital format of DVD can be easily copied and shared creating a bootleg economy of DVD that has inhibited the growth of film industry in the country.

I argue that DVD distribution technology has opened up new distribution avenues, breaking the geographical barriers that hindered dissemination of movies in rural areas that lack Cinema theatres as well as television. It also ushered in an era of digitization of distribution of movies in the country. It has created informal film distribution based on direct to video release in Kenya, with DVD release occupying the first line in distribution. Culturally, it has influenced film consumption from social consumption of movies in cinema theatres to privatization of film consumption in people laptops and Televisions.

2.3 Riverwood: Kenyan Informal Distribution Hub

The cultural transformation of DVD distribution in Kenya gives rise to Riverwood, as the nerve center of DVD mass circulation to other parts of the country. As espoused by Christopher Vourlias:

From the outside, Nairobi's Simba Center might look like any other commercial plaza in the Kenyan capital, with signs advertising Internet cafes and hair salons and promises of instant cash. Inside, though, is the nerve centre of a local film industry that produces more than 100 pics a year. Dubbed "Riverwood," after the chaotic stretch of Nairobi's River Road where the industry got its start, it's Kenyan's homegrown attempt to give a local face to film-making. (Vourlias)

The above illustration espoused by Vourlias on what is Riverwood is the true reflection of Riverwood. The name Riverwood is today synonymous with Kenya's bootleg economy. Kisila affirms this in his article *Kenya's Riverwood film industry: A Theoretical postulation (2020)* that "Since the nineteen-fifties, River Road has earned the bland of a sizzling, underworld of crime, prostitution, dingy bars and bustling nightlife" (97). Therefore, from time immemorial River road street has been a vital cog in the distribution of bootleg activities over the years. Labato, in mapping out informal film distribution in Africa finds that "The routes through which videos travel to meet their audiences are labyrinthine and informal, but they are also organised and efficient. Part of the reason for this is the fact that these networks evolved from pre-existing circuits formerly occupied with the illegal distribution of Hollywood and Bollywood bootlegs." (144) The aforementioned quite mirrors the Riverwood that is centered on the preexisting roots of music piracy in the River road street as affirmed by Nyutho that, "Most of the early operatives in River Road started the business after failing to secure formal employment and started hawking music audio CDs dubbed for mass distribution on River road" (177). Therefore, Riverwood film distribution stems from the piracy roots of music.

Furthermore, Riverwood's video distribution is a culture in Kenya that is dynamically empowered by the material infrastructure of dissemination, that its existence, is contingent upon distribution circuits, which provide specialized communities with the appropriate limits for engagement with movies. Its formation stems from the increasing demand for both locally and internationally produced films, which were illegally distributed. Rachel Diang'a, in her article, *Themes in Kenyan cinema: Seasons and reasons (2017)* posits that:

The rise of Riverwood in the early 2000s was partly necessitated by the fissure that had been created between the professional film-makers and the audience, who were now left with no option but to consume the pirated foreign productions mainly from Hollywood, India, Nigeria

and sometimes Ghana. This gap was worsened by very poor distribution and exhibition used by the local film-makers. (6)

Though she postulates that the rise of Riverwood was as a result of the gap between professional film-makers and audience as well as the poor distribution system of film; the position might not be the true reflection of the rise of Riverwood as a vital cog of movie dissemination in the country. The informal nature of Riverwood's distribution of films enabled film producers to dissolve many bottlenecks that are involved in the dissemination of film in the Kenyan market. What Ramon Labato affirms in theorizing informal film distribution that the "The informal distribution system that is the backbone of the video economy has dissolved many of the circulatory blockages that plague film industries in other parts of the world (168) such as global south countries like Kenya and Nigeria that lack structured film distribution systems. Thus, the informal distribution channels such as River Road in Kenya and Abuja market in Nigeria provide avenues for circulation of movies to the audience.

Kisila observes that Riverwood has diffused to other parts of the city as well as countryside as it becomes vertically integrated noting that:

During its short lifespan, Riverwood has developed a local version of the vertically integrated film industry, and its production hub has grown to encompass River Road surroundings that include Luthuli Avenue, Tom Mboya Street, and Accra Road in downtown Nairobi. It has also branched out to other towns in the country. (98)

The diffusion of Riverwood as a model of distribution can be attributed to disruptive technological rollover that moved the Kenyan film industry from analogue to digital.

Ramon Labato in mapping out *Film Distribution and Dependency in Africa* argues that "The current video economy has its roots in a set of material and economic conditions which rendered celluloid cinema a redundant medium across most of Africa and cleared the way for low-cost video

production to emerge as an alternative. (171) An occurrence is synonymous to Riverwood activities of mass informal distribution, which is characterized by low-budget production, rapid shooting, loose scripting, and use of home-video technology.

Furthermore, digitization of distribution of film in Kenya has led to the democratisation of film distribution in Kenya. As highlighted by Diang'a that "the realisation that with digital film production and exhibition technology, learning the art and technique of film-making became easier given the much-simplified equipment and process of production made *Riverwood* flourish fast." (6) It can therefore be argued that Riverwood is a result of diffusion of digital technology in Kenya that socially liberalize film distribution, exhibiting and production as diagnosed in the above quote.

From the ongoing, it is clear that Riverwood as a manifestation of disruptive innovations creates new market, products as well as services. Christensen summarizes this by acknowledging that as the true power of disruptive technologies lies not in their ability to disrupt and replace mainstream technologies, but in their capability to enlarge and broaden markets, and provide new functionality (45). Digital technologies have bred the Kenyan film distribution market as manifested in Riverwood, thus, widening film circulation to various parts of the country through DVD circulation. Henceforth, I argue that Riverwood is as a result of digitization of film distribution in Kenya, that have changed the distribution landscape via DVD innovation

2.4 The Movie Shop Culture

The spread and embracing of digital technologies socially liberalize new mediums of film distribution, fashioning the video distribution culture that is entangled into the everyday lives of movies in the country. Philip Etemesi espoused this cultural transformation by digital innovations in Nation Newspaper title *MAN IN THE HOOD: What would life be like without movies shops?* That:

In the estate, a movie shop is a very iconic place. It is where you go to purchase your dose of riveting foreign cinematic and Television production when you are still breaking to afford your Wi-Fi. It is also a place where you go when you do not have enough cool friends who keep up with the latest movies. In short, you have no one to borrow from. That is why movie shops are always full. (Etemesi)

According to Etemesi's presupposition, Movie Shops' distributors not only acts as gatekeepers for the dissemination of movies but also as a social event where the film audience gets to purchase the latest movies. Furthermore, video film culture is closely incorporated into the daily life of its audiences as it responds directly to their needs.

Principally, their working mechanism is based on downloading or fetching films from the movie stores and then distributing them to consumers. It happens that, from mid-2000 to date, and with the closure of the majority of Kenyan cinemas, Video Shops has emerged to cater for the demand of film audiences in the country. They thrived quickly because of selling cheaper DVDs which led to the proliferation of video shops in the estates as well as in most of the Shopping malls. I observe that the location of movie vendor shops at major shopping malls is an indication of the importance of their distribution to the middle-class society as well as the cultural evolution brought by digital innovations in Kenya. Therefore, their presence in the mentioned spaces aids in disseminating and circulating the content through DVDs to the Home Video Market.

Lauren Carrol Harris in her PhD dissertation *Theorising the Cultural Impacts of Film Distribution in the cinema and Beyond* (2017) posits that "Film cultures are dynamically enabled by material infrastructures of circulation: there are myriad film cultures and their existence is contingent upon distribution circuits, which provide specialized communities with the appropriate limits for engagement with cinema (139). I back this argument by the mushrooming of home Video Shop culture in the home video market distribution. The video shop culture of distribution

illustrates how digital technologies have shaped film distribution in the country. The Kenyan government realized their importance in the film economy in Kenya and formed Kenya Film and Classification Board that regulate the video shops around the country.

Further probe on the movie shops reveals that it has created employment in the film industry. Not only does it impact the market by offering job opportunities to most of the youths, but also, it has been at the forefront of those small-scale businesses that generate sizeable revenue to the government through direct and indirect taxation of either the seller or the buyer. However, there has been a setback for this mode of distribution due to technological disruption, over the past three years, video-on-demand services have threatened their survival in the market.

Besides, Daniel Herbert in his article *Nostalgia Merchants: VHS Distribution in the Era of Digital Delivery* diagnosed that

Although many people still buy DVDs at various brick-and-mortar retail locations or rent discs from one of the nearly forty thousand Redbox locations, there has been a steady decline in the market for video as a material object; the major Hollywood studios stopped releasing their movie on VHS in 2006, and DVD sales have declined since 2007 (3)

Conversely, online distribution has been on the rise with the arrival of efficient and affordable broadband in Kenya contributing to streaming and downloading in digital platforms in recent years. Likewise, streaming and downloading of movies bypass Video Shop distributors rendering them obsolete. Thus, for the video shop distributors in Kenya, digitization of consumption has been a disruptive innovation to their business operations. This is as a result of the restructuring of film distribution value chain and direct dissemination to consumers. Nonetheless, it happens that the majority of Kenyans find themselves visiting the Movie shops once in a while just to get updated on the current movies. This is what Harris concluded that "While the onset of Video on Demand has shifted the home entertainment market, informal and small-scale video rentals and

sales remain an overlooked aspect of the way audiences access the film in the shifting distribution landscape” (149). The shifting distribution landscape as a result of digital innovations will be catastrophic for the video shops in the country. I conclude that, unfortunately, this could be a signal to its (movie shop) slow and gradual removal from the Kenyan market, as witnessed in the closure of several movie shops in recent years.

2.5 Digital Distribution Landscape in Kenya

Kenyan film Industry has always been grounded on the Home Video dissemination model. That is founded on DVD circulation of movies, Television broadcast with few Cinema Theatres release. However, in recent years there is a drastic shift towards the distribution of films through the Internet (Video on Demand). This has fundamentally changed the Home Video market distribution in the country. As Video on Demand platforms replaces DVDs as new mediums of distribution. It has also bypassed the traditional distributors (Movie Shops, Cinema Theatres and Television Broadcast) business, by directly distributing motion pictures to consumers. This is what Zhu posits that “With Video on Demand, the selection is almost infinite and geographic proximity is inconsequential” (1). Consumers did not need to walk to cinema theatres or movie rental shops to buy the latest film. It is this critical eye, that I address the looming technological disruption in the distribution in Kenya.

Moreover, Ndemo and Weiss observe digital transformation in Kenya through the internet revolution in Kenya's business. They acknowledge That

Innovations are destroying old ways of doing business, and smart young start-up entrepreneurs are at the forefront of this quiet but historical transformation. Teams of skilled developers and programmers have sprung up in innovation hubs, incubators, and accelerators across the country to build information and telecom solutions that capitalize on the country's mix of challenges and opportunities (1).

The illustration above is a manifestation of how digital technology has transformed Kenya. Film distribution has not been immune to the transformation. New mediums (YouTube, Netflix, and Viusasa) of distribution are displacing the traditional mediums of dissemination in the market.

Furthermore, the film distribution landscape in Kenya is undergoing a profound structural shifts as new mediums of distribution operate in a different way compared to the traditional mediums. Nonetheless, digitization of distribution is modifying film distribution business model altering release patterns as well as responding to a seismic shift in consumers' behaviour and expectations. What Screen Australia in the report *Issues in Film Distribution* diagnosed that

While the internet has enabled greater audience numbers to watch more feature films than at any time in history, it has also caused these audiences to fragment across multiple platforms. These changes are affecting the industry globally, impacting not only on Hollywood studios but also on distributors, sales agents, exhibitors, home video retailers and small independent producers. While no one in the industry is immune, this new fragmenting distribution landscape poses a particular and acute challenge for independent films and those engaged in their production and distribution worldwide. (4)

The above quote is echoed in the Kenyan Film industry, in particular the distribution aspect of the film. Movie rentals shops are being closed as more people in the country flock to the internet to get tailor-made movies of their taste.

The transformation due to digital innovations can be attributed to the government of Kenya through its Vision 2030, an economic Blueprint launched in 2006. It (Vision 2030) recognizes the strategic role of ICT in stimulating the growth of the Kenyan economy leading the government over the past years to invest in the infrastructures that facilitate the growth of ICT in the country, hence, transforming Kenya to a Digital economy. (MICT 45).

Infrastructures implementations which involves the connection of users to the internet such as fibre, wireless, or satellite has resulted into the internet boom in the country. Furthermore, the internet boom in Kenya has led to the availability of affordable broadband internet through phones,

modems, Wi-Fi and Fiber Connections. This has facilitated the digitization of film distribution in the country which in turn has democratized distribution of movies via many platforms. The diffusion of the use of digital platforms to get movies is gradually shifting the motion picture distribution landscape in Kenya. This is highlighted through the continued reconfiguration in the ways people receive movies in the country.

Digital distribution mediums' ability to apply algorithms to determine consumers' habits of screening movies have enabled the mediums to distribute movies tailored to their consumer's demand. As espoused by Michael Baye et al. in their work on *Economic Analysis of the Digital Economy* that:

Leading media platforms (e.g., Netflix, Amazon, and iTunes) now provide users with recommendations for specific media titles based on sophisticated algorithms that account for a given user's preferences as well as the rating provided by other users. Consumers also receive recommendations through social networks such as Facebook; "friends" can indicate whether they "liked" a particular song, movie, or book. Many of these recommendation systems operate in real-time and used purchase patterns of consumers would be otherwise unaware. (138)

The tailor-made services offered by Online Video Distributions platforms via algorithm has fueled the adoption of digital platforms in the country. Culturally, the audience culture of reception of movies has also shifted. Consumers want to receive movies on the go, rather than walking to cinema theatres or movie rental shops to get the latest movies. This has influenced distribution mediums in the country. The result has been increased diffusion of digital innovations in the country. The proliferation and popularity of the use of online video distribution platforms (YouTube, Netflix, Showmax, Viusasa, and Vimeo) to acquire movies, is the hallmark in the shift in film distribution from Video Shops to Online platforms.

Likewise, there has been a drastic decline in DVD distribution in recent years in the country. The services that were once offered by the DVD distributors rental shops have been digitized by

online video distribution, consequently, eliminating the physical walking to the Movie Shop to buy a movie of your choice. This is what Christensen describes as disruptive innovation as “An innovation that tends to be inferior and low in its introduction to the market, becoming better and better with technological enhancement displacing the incumbent with new goods and services that are cheap, simple, and convenient” (5) Digital distribution constructed an entirely new product and services in the film market, grounded in the internet-based distribution of movies, fashioning new medium of distribution of movies through a simple interface like smartphones, tablets and Laptops at the convenient of consumers.

These new services offered by the online video distribution innovation has transformed film dissemination in Kenya. With the availability of efficient, affordable, and fast internet in Kenya, many movies consumers have adopted the new medium of Film Distribution. Zhu posits that "Digital film delivery may displace physical films, video, and DVDs, thus threatening the long term survival of video rental stores and other middle layers in the value chain." (273) Since they are threatening the distributors in the movie shop with elimination with the capability to bypass them directly to the consumers, these online video distribution platforms offer services, such as downloading, process where the consumer can download the movie through file-sharing sites, to watch later, and share with their friends, turning the consumers to mini distributors among their friends, further threatening the profits of movie distributors in Kenya. The proliferation, diffusion, and adoption of online video distribution platforms have resulted in a seismic shift into consumer habits of acquiring movies. Movie consumers have developed a high demand for movies with little appetite to pay for the movies leading to increase piracy on digital platforms.

Digital platforms have a huge repository of movies that consumers can find, unlike distributors such as Video rental shop that lack a variety of movies, leading to the decline of

consumers to acquire movies in the Rental shops. Sarah Whitten observes this phenomenon in her article entitled, *The Death of the DVD: Why sales dropped more than 86% in 13 years in the CNBC Entertainment Newspaper*, she observes that

Since 2008, DVD sales have declined more than 86% globally, as a result of the rise of streaming services offered by Netflix, YouTube, and Hulu couple with a drastic shift in how consumers are screening films and Television shows could be the final death knell for the DVD Technology. (Whitten)

Drastic fall of DVD sales globally is an indication of the ramifications of digital innovations in the distribution of motion pictures. The popularity of online video distribution to acquire movies in the country, as well as file-sharing platforms is threatening the movie shop business in the country.

Furthermore, Mugabi Musambi observes that the movie shop business in Kenya is in terminal decline; the once healthy market has spiraled steeply south. He observes that in recent years' movie shops have been drastically closing in various parts of Nairobi. He notes that this is a result of the convenience of the streaming sites. The movie shop business model was based on downloading the latest films. Thus, what the movie shop owners needed was the fast internet.

This meant that buying a physical DVD copy was necessary for many Kenyans who did not have access to the internet. However, in recent years, the spread of fibre cable by Telecom companies such as Safaricom, Jamii Telecom, and Zuku in the various part of the country, enable most estates in urban areas in the country to have efficient, reliable, and readily available internet. In addition to the arrival of Netflix services in the country. Film consumers did not need to go to a video shop to get the latest movies as they can stream as well as download the movies as long as they are connected online.

Learning institutions and recreational Centers have efficient Wi-Fi. Students in learning institutions who were a reliable customer base for movie shops end up downloading the movies

online. Once they do so, they quickly share the movie files with their friends through flash disks or mobile application platforms like Telegram, thus, no need for DVDs distribution anymore, since you can get a constant supply of movies from friends even if you have no access to the internet. Also, fibre cable connectivity in the urban areas within the estate has made it easy for streaming and downloading of motion pictures in their homes. Hence, eliminating the need to go to the movie shop to buy movies. Likewise, the mushrooming of internet-enabled smartphones has led to the rise in the use of the mobile phone as a medium for acquiring movies. Additionally, availability of free and efficient Wi-Fi hotspots in buses, recreational centres and most public places, means that majority of Kenyans can access the internet and download their favourite movies through their phones. Once they have downloaded movies, they can share with their friends, effectively eliminating the services of movie shops vendors.

A Research by Social Media Africa Lab Africa housed by United States International University-Africa, on *Social Media Consumption in Kenya: Trends and Practices, 2019*, finds out that 28% of Kenyans use Social Media for Entertainment, while 74.4% of Kenyans use YouTube for entertainment with an average of each spending more than three hours in YouTube (14), which is an indication of a change in Kenyan audience in acquiring film. The popularity of the use of YouTube, Netflix, and Viusasa and other movie streaming sites is a manifestation of the enhanced benefit consumers are getting from the new digital platform of film broadcasting as a result of digital technology.

Thus, I have argued that digital distribution has brought transformations in the Kenyan film landscape rendering traditional mediums obsolete. They also offer tailor-made film using the algorithm to profile the consumers' preferences on movies. These factors may oblige traditional mediums of distribution to transform their business models into new types of aggregators, to

survive total obliteration by the new digital channel of distribution, though the process might be gradual.

2.5.1 Netflix

To begin with, Netflix, for instance, is a typical platform that many viewers go to for online entertainment. It is a subscription-based streaming platform that allows subscribers to watch movies on demand on the computer and mobile devices through paying the monthly subscription fee. As a digital medium of distribution, it was established in 1997 as a DVD rental shop. By contrast in terms of time and operationalization, its content was ordered online and delivered by mail. Today, the company has transformed itself into a global company of streaming movies, documentaries, television series, and animations. Statistically speaking, it has managed to command about sixty million subscribers as per 2015. This is quite a significant stride given that film and commerce intersect towards boosting the economy of a country. By the fact that it maintains such a big network of operation, it has absorbed a litany of previously unemployed but skilled members of staff, producers and film directors. Exclusively, all these works towards its efficiency and innovation of popularizing digitization of film distribution beyond its epicentre.

This statement brings this discussion to Kenya. In terms of periodization, Netflix was launched in 2016. Because of its new ways of distribution, it posed a huge competition to preexisting mediums of distribution such as Dstv, Zuku, Safaricom—this shift can be attributed to its affordability and tailor-made movies it offers to consumers. This is because, unlike the aforementioned, Netflix fans were marveled by its complex database of movies that paves a way to a new sense of entertainment experience—where customers got access to the content after parting ways with a small subscription (For instance, its package goes at 7.99 dollars compared to 10 and 100 dollars that other providers charge) and in turn, they had a chance to access unlimited

junctions of fun and quality. Stressing this further, its mode of function reveals that, by the fact that it could be installed in android smartphone and tablets and still retain the precision of its accessibility, altogether, I argue that it not only came along with discussed merits but also, it brought about competitiveness in how the film is distributed digitally. Its highly rated shows such as *Money Heist* are downloaded and distributed in affordable pen drives.

Thus, Netflix has not only disrupted the movie shops in the country but also consumer living rooms. Its programming has drastically altered how movies are consumed and experienced. Netflix customers have access to a library of options of movies, algorithm personalizes selection of movies based on customer's preferences, this innovative service has facilitated the diffusion of Netflix in the country. Netflix has also been optimizing to enable it to be screened through mobile phones, hence privatizing film consumption as well as liberalizing distribution mediums, thus, changing the consumers' habits. Consumers are no longer restricted to leisure time or over the weekend to watch movies with a friend or in theatre. Moreover, Netflix has enabled consumers to access entertainment on smartphones as they commute to work in the morning or stuck in traffic. To restate my conclusion Netflix has impacted on Kenya film Industry by disrupting Movie Shop business, evident in consumers' evolving consumption habits as well as liberalization of mediums of film consumption in the country.

2.5.2 YouTube

Film distribution historically has been a rather undemocratic industry, with multiple entry barriers especially in Kenya that lack structured distribution channels. However, YouTube a major free online distribution medium, has democratized distribution in the country. Its epiphany can be traced to the year 2005 when *Lazy Sunday* was uploaded and attracted over two million viewers in just one night. Since then billions of movie watch time has been recorded on the platform. As

affirmed by Winograd and Hais, its viewership range at about 500 billion per day (153). This indicating its popularity when compared to other Video on Demand services that peg their content to subscription, and the fact that viewers can access the content for free. Thus, I argue that it has transformed online video distribution by democratising film distribution.

While all that is within the spectrum of the world—where it diffused to before hitting the Kenyan market, in Kenya, a similar trend (that impacts on video distribution) has been noted. The rise of YouTubers celebrities as well as a huge deposit of Kenyan movies distributed through the platform has indeed revolutionised the dissemination of film in Kenya. YouTube has facilitated the mass distribution of movies in the county leading to the creation of an individual viewer through the privatization of consumption of movies free of peer or societal judgment of movie content choices.

The YouTube community in Kenya has produced content of the various kind that has been distributed on YouTube. Thus, addressing the lacuna that existed of distribution in the country where amateurs and professional producers alike can distribute their content freely. Liberalizing as well as democratising the film distribution in the country, creating a cultural intermediary that has fundamentally shaped film distribution discourse in the country. Indeed, YouTube turning from an interpersonal video-sharing service in the world-leading video distribution community on the internet has not only transformed the notion of film distribution but also the film consumers in the country. Richard Grusim in his work *YouTube at the end of New Media* asserts that:

YouTube is promiscuous, however; any video can easily be embedded within virtually any digital medium. Thus when I learn about a video I should watch, the video is almost always embedded in another medium — the e-mail, text message, blog, Facebook page or other media form where I learned of the clip in the first place. (61)

This has facilitated the consumption of movies on YouTube platform since it can be easily disseminated by embedding other digital platforms such as social media platforms to distribute to a wide audience. It has revolutionized film distribution in Kenya that was inhibited by poor distribution channels as well lack and/or poor marketing of local films.

This study has come to a finding that, YouTube is a game-changer to the reception, dissemination, and screening of motion pictures. For, example, a study published by United States International University discloses that an average Kenyan spend more than three hours on YouTube (36). What is noticeable is that, because of this platform, content distribution to smartphones, laptops and Smart Television has reconfigured the traditional models of how consumers access the film. YouTube has optimised its platform to enable one to stream on the smartphones through the YouTube application, further liberalizing reception medium of film which has in turn led to diffusion of YouTube in the country, since it is readily available on phone and at no cost compared to other digital mediums. Indeed, YouTube has risen as culturally and economically significant on film distribution landscape in Kenya. Through disrupting the television industry, it has continued to expand the film industry in Kenya witnessed by the avalanche of Kenya film distributed in the medium over the years.

2.5.3 Viusasa

Having focused on Netflix and YouTube, this study goes ahead to probe into *Viusasa*, a Kenyan Online Video On Demand owned by Royal Media Services. It depends on android and smartphone technologies to disseminate film content to subscribers. From lexis of etymology, the word *Viusasa* is an amalgamation of an English (view) and Kiswahili (sasa) words to bring a blend of Sheng, *Viusasa*, meaning *view now*. As a new brand in Kenya's film distribution, Viusasa has accentuated how the content is viewed, sold and rated. Mr. George Waititu, the brain behind the Viusasa

invention says that the application was a result of the emerging market needs and the problems that producers of local movies faced in the distribution of their movies (Business Today Reporter) such as lack of formal digital distribution mediums that target a diverse audience of the Kenyan population. Viusasa was as a response of local film producers facing high barriers in monetizing their creations on online video distribution platforms. The informal nature of distribution in Kenya has propelled piracy as the order of the day of distribution, facilitated by affordable broadband connection in the country which has increased digital piracy. Netflix, Hulu, and Showmax had little interest in distributing Kenya movies leading to the rescue by *Viusasa*.

Indeed, other Online Video Distribution platforms are synonymous with dissemination of foreign movies. Netflix has few local film title on its platform despite having an office in Nairobi. YouTube on another hand though has a huge repository of local title, it is hard for the producers to get money on the YouTube platform. It is also prone to piracy through illegal downloading of its content. Thus, the arrival of *Viusasa* revolutionised film distribution in the country. By liberalizing digital distribution to local film producers, it introduced a new dimension in the distribution of indigenous Kenyan films digitally which has been characterized by informal film distribution over the years.

Rachel Diang'a in her work on *Viusasa and Film Distribution* elucidate that "Viusasa has transformed the distribution of motion pictures in Kenya with its ability to disseminate indigenous film in all regions of the country and beyond. Creating a unique opportunity for audiences to screen indigenous content through indigenous languages via their mobile phone application" (57). A niche market that was created by the failure by Netflix to screen indigenous film production on its platform. Its popularity in both rural and urban areas is a manifestation of its diffusion and adaptation by Kenyans.

Since its debut, Kenya National Drama and Film Festivals have started distributing their movies on the platform, after almost six years producing movies yet not distributing anywhere, which is an indication of its importance to the Kenya Film Industry. Local film producers, previously, used the self-distribution model of distribution from House to House, Market days, Churches, and Local Television channels to distribute their films to their target audience based on the region, thus, enabling the film producer to reach the maximum target audience. However, Viusasa has removed the hustle and buzzle of self-distribution by digitizing local film distribution. With ineffective distribution and marketing of indigenous motion picture in Kenya, there has been an influx of foreign movies from Hollywood, Nollywood, and Bollywood that infiltrate Kenya's market via informal mass distribution channels. Thus, Viusasa provides a gateway into an area where Kenya's content is given a chance to display its potential and even eliminating piracy that is associated with the decline of incoming local content. Diang'a observes that Viusasa has helped in fighting piracy through bypassing the informal distribution channels (58). However, the platform is prone to digital piracy as people can illegally download movies and share them with others easily.

2.5.4 Mobile Phone Distribution

Film distribution landscape in Kenya is experiencing a fundamental shift as digital technologies introduce new mediums of film dissemination as traditional mediums of film circulation become less viable in the country as a result of the lack of structured distribution channels. The new landscape brought by digital technologies like mobile phone movie distribution has not only liberalized mediums of film distribution but has also brought privatization of film consumption. At the same time, the development of android technology in the mobile phone industry has fueled film dissemination and consumption through mobile phones.

Film distribution, historically, has been characterized by bureaucracies with multiple entry barriers and procedures that have hindered film growth in the country. Digitization in film distribution has ushered in an epoch of film distribution through the phones. Mobile phone distribution has radically transformed film distribution in the country. It has enabled consumers to watch movies on the go, leading to the proliferation of mobile applications for online video distribution. This is represented by cultural transformation within the digital technology-driven environment. What I observe as a whole is that the new distribution medium with mobile phones is at the core of movies circulation fashioned as a result of a new culture that is driven by tech-savvy film audience and filmmakers that is approaching film distribution in new ways. The affordability of broadband internet in the country has also further fueled the diffusion of smartphone distribution of the film in the country.

In Kenya besides Television and Cinema Theatre. Mobile phone motion picture distribution is yet another platform that people use to distribute film. Statistical data approximates that, the total number of active internet data subscriptions in Kenya was 42.2 million through mobile phones (CA 17). This indicates that the majority got connected to the internet through mobile phone subscriptions, an indication of the mobile phone technological cultural revolution in the adoption of digital technology. As Micheala Rabova's article, *Mobile phone filmmaking as a participatory medium: The case study of 24 Frames 24 Hours*, observes that, "The mobile phone has become much more than a device for voice-calls-it has become a central cultural technology in its own right" (2). I argue that mobile phones have been the linchpin of digital distribution and consumption of film in Kenya.

Again, by mode of operation, the investment of Safaricom, Telecom and Airtel into 4G Network generation enables the audio-visual material to be streamed efficiently over internet

platforms. The recent rolling out of Safaricom 5G Network in Kenya is a manifestation of the profound impact of mobile phones in offering streaming services. With the growth of the middle class as well as film-obsessed millennials, streaming of latest movies through mobile phone applications has propelled the growth of mobile phones as a medium of motion picture distribution in Kenya. The advantage of mobile phone distribution when compared to Television and Cinema is its concept of confidentiality. In concrete terms, there is no need to negotiate its uses with other family members. The fact that it is portable and that it can be accessed anywhere at any time gives it a boost over its competitors.

The privatization of film consumption through mobile phone technologies creating individualistic distribution of movies has made it to become an empowering technology. It is because they open up the possibility for individuals awakening the power of controlling and regulating film distribution. Thus, I argue that the mobile phone distribution in Kenya have democratized distribution landscape in Kenya, giving the filmmakers the freedom to distribute film without any form of regulation and control. Furthermore, mobile phones have evolved to be additional personal medium of distribution and reception of movies and other entertainment content. Unlike television, the mobile phone can support a variety of screening styles – such as the lean back, lean forward as well as ambient viewing. Thus, the encryption of mobile phone distribution of motion pictures take place in the integrity of the system of cultural representation that has built the mobile phone film consumption culture that led to the birth of Viusasa in Kenya

Moreover, Motion Picture distribution across the globe is rapidly occurring in digital platforms, translating in the number of devices capable of supporting the digital media as well as increasing internet access speed. This has provided consumers with freedom of accessing motion picture of his/her choice anytime, and anywhere. Deloitte observes that smartphone has become

the preferred medium of consuming digital online media (5). The mobile phone through the innovation of smartphone applications has been at the forefront in revolutionizing the distribution of motion picture at any time, and anywhere as long as you have internet access.

The total number of active internet data subscriptions in Kenya was 42.2 million through mobile phones (CA 17). A manifestation that the majority of Kenyans get connected to the internet through mobile phone subscriptions. Mobile phone applications have become an indispensable factor in the daily lives of people in Kenya. Consequently, almost all television houses are developing a mobile application to distribute their media through smartphones. This can be attributed to where a majority in Kenya consume digital media through mobile phones leading mobile phones to become a major medium of distributing film.

However, the mobile phone has been a technological disruption to the television distribution and DVD circulation of movies as well. Consumers prefer the dissemination of movies through their mobile phones, since it is easy, and cheap compared to the DVD. Mobile phones enhancements with bigger space to store digital movies with a bigger screen have also contributed to the shift to mobile phone distribution of movies. I observe that majority of people visiting movie shops prefer that they are disseminated movies through their phones at the expense of the DVD. This has contributed to a drastic fall in DVD dissemination of motion picture in Kenya in recent years. It has also liberalized piracy. Since a movie copied in the mobile phones can be easily re-distributed through file sharing application on the mobile phone such as *Xender* and *Bluetooth* among others, thus, democratising film piracy in Kenya.

I have argued that this transformation of the mobile phone led it to be a distribution medium of film in the country. It shifted the distribution landscape of film in Kenya, from the social distribution of movies in cinema theatres, television broadcasting, to informal movie shop

distribution in Kenya, to individual distribution of the film through your phone expanding the privatization of film consumption in the country. I argue that this has led to the democratisation of film distribution and concluded that it has disrupted the DVD circulation of movies by directly distributing movies to consumers. It as well has liberalized digital piracy with the ease at which the film can be illegally re-distributed to other people on the mobile phone platform.

2.6 Conclusion

The present chapter has focused on the Impact of digital technologies on Kenya's film distribution, through the lens of technological disruption, historical and cultural, as the main entrance of my arguments. I have argued that digital technologies have created new avenues of film distribution over the years. From a historical perspective, digital technology introduced a new medium of distribution through the innovation of VHS, and DVD technologies that resulted in the video boom industry in the late 1990s in Kenya. To paraphrase Nyutho, the entry of the video VHS into the Kenyan market rattled the film industry. Both mechanical and digital innovations have influenced everything from equipment to distribution, changing how films are produced and how we consume them (170). Thus, I posit that the entry of digital technology in Kenya shifted the distribution landscape discourse from analogue to digital platforms.

I problematised that distribution network does more than delivering movie content to consumers, they shape film culture through structuring our habits and tastes. As theorized by Lauren Carroll Harris that;

Film cultures form around distribution circuits so that audiences can have their expectations, identities and tastes reinforced by like minds: for a post-film discussion, for an overlooked film not available anywhere else, or for a home viewing with friends who cite their favourite lines of dialogue aloud. This is because film cultures via their distribution methods structure the mechanics of arrival (format and mediality, e.g. copied and legitimate DVDs or celluloid film), social practices (e.g. conversations with shopkeepers, purchasing food items) and space where the film is watched (e.g. the home or a big-screen environment with high-quality

audiovisual) – geospatially and technologically narrowcasting to their constituent audiences (164)

I argue that the Movie Shop culture in Kenya is a manifestation of the above quote. It existed as a result of the digitization of distribution in Kenya that created the movie shop culture. I observe that mushrooming of movies shops has also had very tangible and material effects on the lives of thousands of movie shop distributors, retailers and film producers and many more who have benefited directly and indirectly by creating jobs for themselves.

This brings me to my next point. To understand the impact of digital technology on distribution in Kenya, I acknowledge the role played by the informal market. I argued in *Riverwood; Kenyan Informal Distribution Hub* that it is based on the preexisting bootleg activity of mass distribution of music. However, *Riverwood* has transformed itself to constitute a common market on their term where movies are now traded right across. While New invention in digital technologies has reconfigured the distribution model of the motion pictures, digital technologies have been disruptive technologies to the incumbent. They tend to bypass the traditional mediums of distribution by directly distributing to the consumers, resulting in the elimination of the traditional medium of distribution in Kenya. I argue that diffusion and adoption of these new mediums to various parts might result in the elimination of traditional mediums of distribution.

CHAPTER THREE

THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY ON THE EXHIBITION OF MOTION PICTURES IN KENYA

3.0 Introduction

The chronicle of the motion picture industry in Kenya runs in tandem with the history of technological innovations. Nonetheless, digital innovations have modified how film is consumed in ways never predicted compelling cinema theatre exhibitors to respond to the uncertainty, with the increasing popularity of watching movies over the internet. Thus, film exhibitors are at crossroads, with the emergence of new screening mediums and the rise of a new type of consumers the i- generation that has popularised consumption of film on the go.

This chapter interrogates the question of how digital innovations have impacted on film consumption. Mapping out the changes created by digital exhibition through the perspective of technological disruption. Secondly, I will examine the Kenyan film exhibitors' reaction to this technological disruption, in the process, discuss how cinema theatre exhibitions have embraced digital innovations that have fashioned cinema theatres as an experience avenue of watching movies. I also clinically examine new forms of motion picture exhibition as well as the peer to peer file sharing in relationship to democratising piracy over the years. It is through the lens of disruptive innovations and sustaining innovations that I intend to explore the impact of digital innovations on the consumption of motion pictures in Kenya. The diffusion of innovation will examine how to question exactly how these innovations are being reinvented and amalgamated by exhibitors in their business.

3.I Resurgence of Cinema Theatres

Despite the rich and successful history of film theatre exhibition of movies in Kenya the arrival of DVD consumption of movies in the late 1980s brought anxiety among cinema theatre exhibitors.

Besides, Nyutho illustrates the unrest by cinema theatres exhibitors as:

The cinema owners petitioned the government to legislate on the use of video to stem its proliferation and the damage it was inflicting to cinema attendance. In August of 1985, the heated video debate reached a new peak with the gazetting of Video Act 1985 after receiving presidential assent. It was good news for cinema owners who had borne the brunt of video's assault on the cinema entertainment market. The decline in attendances had started in 1978 and film distributors blamed it on the illegal importation of video cassettes. (171)

Moreover, DVD consumption of movies led to the change in taste and demand, creating the culture of private consumption of film, that was hitherto in the confines of cinema theatres. Later, the advent of online streaming of movies drastically reduced cinema attendance in the country. This is what I describe as a tech- digitization which has transformed both the audience and consumption mediums of movies in Kenya in recent years.

Furthermore, movie theatres have been the linchpin of film consumption in Kenya before the dawn of DVD and online(digitization) consumption of movies. Also, the digitization of consumption of movies in the country brought movie screening to the masses that could not afford to go to cinema theatres due to lack of cinema theatres in most parts of the country. The Kenyan government further supplemented the lack of cinema theatre exhibitions in rural areas with mobile cinema screened at night in the village. As asserted by Nyutho that "The mobile cinema was reintroduced in 1966, three years after Kenya achieved independence" (85) to bring cinema exhibition to rural areas that lack cinema theatres.

Moreover, during this period cinema theatre screening was the main avenue of watching movies and were characterized by films with foreign titles. The period was marked by several

foreign cinema exhibitor companies opening cinema theatres in the country. For instance, Okoti postulates that:

The main movie theatres were Nairobi Cinema, Kenya Cinema and 20th Century. Well-to-do people who owned cars, mostly Indians, could drive to Thika Road or Mombasa Road for their Drive-in Cinemas. There were also cinema halls like Cameo, Casino and Odeon which screened Golden Cowboy Movies. Embassy Cinema was popular for Bollywood movies. (Okoti)

The cinema theatre exhibition boom occasioned the influx of several foreign cinema theatres exhibitors in the country as illustrated by the quote above. With the majority of urban dwellers attending movie theatres with their families and friends mostly on weekends; the cinema theatres later spread to various major towns (Kisumu, Mombasa, and Nakuru) when cinema exhibitions business was thriving in the country.

However, digitisation of consumption of motion pictures in the late 1990s, first through DVDs screening of films and later internet streaming of movies, affected the cinema screening of movies in the country. This resulted in an array of digital mediums of consumption of movies that have gradually shifted from cinema-going to digital consumption of movies. The digitization of the economy of Kenya fueled the shift. It started in the country in 1980 and continues to the present day. It (digitization of economy) has been characterized by its technological disruption of incumbent businesses and services. Undeniably, in the cinema exhibition business, it has transformed the sector by shifting film consumption to the digital platforms leading to the closure of several cinema theatres in the country. For example, major cinema theatres such as *Odeon Cinema, Kenya Cinema, Fox Kisumu* and *Dream theatres* among others had to close down and it was credited to digital consumption of movies that has disrupted their businesses. The consequence was the declining consumption of motion pictures in the cinema theatres as cheap DVD films flooded the market.

Nonetheless, over the three years, the country has experienced the greatest cinema exhibition resurgence. This is due to technological enhancement such as 3D,4D and 7D screens in the cinema theatres, that has revolutionised how film is screened in the cinema in recent years fundamentally changing cinema theatres from a single screen to multiplex cinema screens of (3D,4D and 7D) screens. The growth of the country's economy, with the rise of shopping malls in Kenya, has also contributed to the resurgence of cinema theatre in recent years by providing an ideal location for cinema screening. This can be attributed to the collaboration between commercial real estate developers and movie theatres exhibitors, as well as a shift in the culture of film consumption due to digitization of consumption of movies.

This has been manifested by cinema theatres allocated in the high-end malls around the country. For instance, Garden City Mall hosting IMAX Cinema Theatre, Thika Road Mall, hosting Showbiz Africa Limited theatre. In addition to complimentary offers such as pre-screening, family fun day and Snacks during viewing to add to the experience of watching movies in the cinema theatres located in the malls. IMAX theatres (cinema theatres fitted with the latest digital technology with dome circular and a huge screen that almost cover the entire theatre and make you feel like part of the film) offers a lounge bar next to the theatre where you can enjoy a special movie theme while sipping your favourite brand.

The entry of IMAX theatres in the country in recent years is a manifestation of digitization of cinema theatre exhibition in Kenya. This resurgence in cinema exhibition in the country is what Carole Kimutai in her article, *Kenya's cinema business is about thinking without the box*, acknowledges that as a matter of fact, digital innovations in the exhibition of films is disrupting as well as sustaining the cinema exhibition in Kenya positing that:

Technology seems to be cutting both ways. While some businesses are pushed out, others

like Fox Theatres saw a gap and introduced the IMAX theatre system showing 3D movies. 3D technology is expected to increase profit margins in a sector that is grappling to survive. Players like the latest entrant Planet Media Cinema have taken innovation seriously and now run a business model that is targeted to offering superior customer experiences. (Kimutai)

IMAX theatres have revolutionised film-watching experience in their theatres. More people are trooping back to the IMAX cinema theatres to watch the latest film releases. The optimization of IMAX theatres with the state of the art digital innovations screens and sound systems has permitted it to create value proposition of movie going-culture as a unique movie watching experience that justifies paying the price of a ticket to watch movies in the theatres.

Alejandro Pardo affirms this in his article “Big screen to the Small ones: How Digitization is Transforming the Distribution, Exhibition and Consumption of Movies.” He posits that exhibitors need to re-adapt themselves to the new digital scenario, upgrading cinemas' technological standards and diversifying business model (24). New cinema theatre exhibitions mushrooming in Kenya is a manifestation of the aforementioned quote, leveraging on the digital innovations to offer superior services to their customers, thus, enabling them to remain competitive in the market. Christensen observes this phenomenon in his seminal work *Innovator's Dilemma* as sustaining innovations. He asserts that:

Some sustaining innovations can be discontinuous or radical, while others are incremental. What all sustaining innovations have in common is that they improve the performance of established products, along the dimensions of performance that mainstream customers in major markets have historically valued. (XV)

Digitisation of cinema theatres in the country has sustained the cinema theatre exhibition via enabling the theatres to screen enhanced motion pictures in the theatre halls. For instance, digital innovations have improved auditory sound system with an improved quality picture in the cinema

theatres. Besides, they (digital technologies) have to transform cinema theatres to a living experience of watching movies by aesthetically amalgamating cinema theatre environment to be part and parcel of the movie environment that you are watching in the theatre.

Additionally, the launching of the first 4D Cinema in Theatre by ANGA in 2017 was the hallmark of the digital transformation of cinema theatre exhibition in Kenya. It had the ability to provide:

An immersive environment where one can actually "feel" the action on the screen from the built-in motion and effects in the seats. The idea behind 4DX is to bring viewers inside the film using a wide array of special effects. Seats move, vibrate, shoot bursts of air and water while giant fans create wind gusts. Fog machines pump out smoke. Like the seat movement coordination, 4DX editors synchronize when the relevant effects need to be executed. 4DX presents an all-five-senses immersive cinematic experience allowing everyone to connect with the movie (Kimutia)

These features have transformed the Cinema theatre exhibition to a medium of experiencing watching movies in a lifetime, justifying the need to spend your money on a movie ticket. These services are superior from the standpoint of current customers and appealing to high-end customers' segment, making cinema theatre exhibition business to remain resilient in the face of intense disruption from digital technologies.

The proliferation of the multiplex cinema screens theatre exhibition, as well as the subsequent digital film consumption boom in Kenya has provided the new lenses of film exhibition in Kenya. It has rendered traditional movie theatres obsolete, solidifying adoption of digital innovations in the movie theatres. Nigel Culkin and Norbert Morawetz in their article *Facing the digital Future* posit that "Digital cinema (the digital projection of content as opposed to 35mm analogue film projection) has been heralded as the biggest change in cinema exhibition since the introduction of sound." (7). It has created a shift in film consumption in the country, with the introduction of multiplex cinema screens.

A study by *Centumre*, on *Cinema Offering in Nairobi*, established that majority of cinema theatre exhibition in Kenya have been all fitted with the cutting-edge digital innovations of the exhibition as the study finds that:

Garden City Mall the main cinema operator is Century IMAX Kenya. It is the biggest and most popular Complex in East Africa. The complex has 5 Cinema Halls, which have 1IMAX screen, 17X9M, with a seating capacity of 286. It has 5 ordinary 2D and 3D screens with a seating capacity of more than 800 people. Showbiz Africa limited hosted by Thika Road Mall are the only Cinema Theatre in Kenya exhibiting in 7D screens, with sitting capacity 24 seats that are angled at 6 degrees of freedom to give the initial 7D experience. Offers include popcorn, soda/water, and hotdog or nachos to add to the movie experience. complementary offers include pre-screening of movies before the actual release. (3-4)

Thus, I argue that digitization of the cinema theatre in Kenya has led to introduction of digital innovation of exhibitions (2D,3D,4D and 7D) as espoused in the above quote. An indicator that cinema theatres in Kenya are embracing digital innovations. Additionally, the location of cinema theatres in the prestigious malls adds to the social experience of going to watch movies in the theatre cinema. After-sale services such as sound, enhancements to create a multidimensional auditory environment; cutting-edge technology of screening movies through 7D with unique sitting arrangements angled at 6 degrees to give the maximum experience of viewing movies, has created superior services offered in cinema theatres increasing cinema attendance over the years. As statically established by *Centumre* that at IMAX Cinema Theatre located in Garden city majority of the people who visit its theatres are the youth at 70% of the viewership, while the remaining are 30% made up of families (4). This can be systematically examined through the transformation of cinema theatres as an experienced avenue of screening movies rather than a

medium of the exhibition of films among the youths. Thus, the resurgence of cinema-going in the country in recent years.

3.2 Digital Exhibition of Film

The advancement in digital innovations based on the internet streaming of movies has fashioned film consumption in different ways. For instance, new mediums (Netflix, YouTube, Showmax and Viusasa) of broadcasting motion pictures, have shifted the audiences' habits of watching movies in recent years. The screen of watching movies has also evolved from big screens in cinema theatres to small screens offered in mobile phone movie consumption hence democratising film consumption in different screens. Furthermore, the application of artificial intelligence enables the new mediums of film screening to broadcast tailored made film to their audience, contributing to upward trajectories in watching movies on the new mediums of film consumption.

Since the invention of the motion picture in the 1890s, the viewing of films has always been confined within cinema theatres and later to people's living rooms with the invention of televisions. Watching movies has always been a social event in the cinema exhibition and Television. However, online film streaming has radically shifted film consumption from social consumption of movies to private consumption of movies in people phones, laptops and tablets, enabling them to stream movie on the go. Huffer refers to this as the democratisation of film exhibition as he illustrates that:

The circulation of the film online is a "democratising process", evident in the breadth and depth of international film now available online, and the greater ease of access to this content for audiences across the world. This is seen by some to present greater commercial opportunities for film-making from countries marginalised by h distribution networks and to foster a more globally diverse and inclusive film viewing culture. (138)

Digitisation of film consumption has liberalized the watching of movies in a variety of screens anywhere in the world, therefore, breaking geographical barriers that inhibited the screening of motion pictures in a different part of the country due to lack of cinema theatres in most parts of the country. You no longer need to walk to the cinema theatres to watch your favourite film title or visit a movie shop to buy the latest release. Hence, I argue that streaming of movies online has eliminated both the physical walk to buy movies in the movie shops or to watch a movie in the cinema theatres.

The affordability and efficient broadband internet offered by telecom providers in the country has propelled the adoption of consumption of movies on digital platforms. Consequently, the rise of the digital screening of motion pictures in Kenya has resulted into marginalisation of traditional mediums of watching movies (Televisions, Cinema Theatres and DVD) over the years. A process described by Christensen as "disruptive innovation that results in a radical change in the rules of competition between market players." (Guercini and Runfola 4). This radical shift has rendered traditional mediums of film consumption obsolete. The consequence has been a dramatic shift with the migration of audience to video-on-demand services as the central source of film screening. Observations made by Gaustad in recent years affirm that "viewers moving from DVD to online video demand platforms, where audiences receive new film releases from different genres tilting competition in favour of streaming sites" (68). The upshot has been increased film consumption on the online platforms at the expense of traditional mediums with diminishing appetite to pay for the films on the digital platforms, due to increased digital piracy in the online film consumption.

I observe that what fuels digitisation of exhibition in the country is the availability of efficient and affordable internet profoundly transforming how we watch movies. This has changed

our perspective on film consumption in both time and space, with the growth of streaming movies growing to a leading market in the country displacing DVD, Television and Cinema. Consequently, shaping film screening culture in the country that has impacted on film exhibitors' business. Moreover, the privatization of film consumption has resulted in a drastic decline in people visiting cinemas and video shops in recent years, hereby, creating uncertainty in the screening business of movies in the country.

Furthermore, digital technologies have given the freedom and liberty to the rural population to watch movies on mobile through their phones, laptops and tablets. It also offers flexibility by allowing users to download movies to watch offline on the go. Consumers have reinvented the digital innovations over the years leading to the proliferation of illegal streaming sites of films as well as illegal downloading of movies. Also, inventions such as *Mpesa*, a digital money transfer from Mobile phones have made it easy for people to pay money for online consumption of movies easily, facilitating the rapid diffusion and adoption of consumption of movies online in the country.

The ability by the digital exhibition platforms to apply algorithms to analyse a wide variety of data about the consumer search patterns while searching and streaming movies on the platforms has led to tailor-made recommendations of movies according to the consumer demand and taste. For instance, Baye et al elucidate that:

Leading media platforms (e.g. YouTube, Netflix, Amazon, and iTunes) now provide users with recommendations for specific media titles based on sophisticated algorithms that account for a given user's preferences as well as the rating provided by other users. Consumers also received recommendations through social networks such as Facebook; "friends" can indicate whether they 'liked' a particular song, movie, or book. Many of these recommendation systems operate in real-time and use purchase patterns of consumers with similar profiles to identify products consumers would be otherwise unaware of. (13)

This has enabled consumers to directly access movies that are tailored to their demands and taste, in addition to a wide variety of movie products easily and conveniently available on digital platforms. Furthermore, services such as personalization of recommendations of search engines have increased consumption of motion pictures on digital platforms in the county. Though it has fragmented film consumers among the numerous mediums that have sprung out. Edward Koech, of Kenya Film Classification Board, Kisumu branch, affirms that over the years there has been a decrease in film exhibitors in Kisumu Region as a result of online video consumption as more film exhibitors are venturing into other business.

On the other hand, the democratization of the exhibition of the motion picture has radically revolutionized the established business models of the exhibition of motion pictures and revenue streams. Gaustad concedes that video streaming operates with different business models compared to the traditional ones. The shift of audiences from one to another is experienced economically (69) obliging exhibitors to reconsider their business strategies in the face of intense competition and piracy. Thus, I have argued that the arrival digital consumption of film in the country, has overcome the limitations of lack of cinema theatres exhibition skewed in metropolitan areas and television channels fragmented at the national level, that have hindered movie exhibition in various parts of the country. However, digital innovations platforms have caused the audience to fragment across multiple platforms of digital consumption of movies. The impact has been stiff competition between the digital platforms of exhibition and distribution with the traditional medium of exhibition. Besides, film consumers have also fragmented on these digital platforms fundamentally transforming the consumers' habit for the high demand for movies with a low diminishing appetite to pay for the movies on digital platforms. This has led to the proliferation of illegal streaming sites and file sharing sites where consumers download and watch movie for free.

3.2.1 YouTube

Digital exhibition of the film resulted in the creation of new mediums of consumption of movies. The diffusion and adoption of the new mediums such as YouTube in the country have reached a critical mass in numerical terms. As quantitatively analysed by SIMELab survey that a vast majority 51.2% use YouTube with an average of three hours on YouTube (18). YouTube has transformed its users' behaviours through new forms of streaming movies with the personalized and individual tailored watching of movies in the country. YouTube's leveraging on sharing experiences and making all film content digitally available for free streaming has further increased its diffusion and adoption in the country in recent years as observed by SIMELab findings.

With film culture of screening shifting into digital realms in the country. I observe that this shift has been popularised by YouTube since its rapid diffusion and adoption in the country. YouTube has transformed film exhibition landscape in the country with its huge repository movies on the platform. YouTube's long tail of content gives consumers an unprecedented screening of a variety of film content. Besides, YouTube platform is also highly interactive medium with audience enjoyment, turning film audience from passive consumers to active consumers of film, its optimization as a mobile phone application to be streamed through smartphones has led to a massive shift in how the film is consumed in the country. Moreover, these features of YouTube have enabled it to satisfy consumers appetite to stream movies on the platform, increasing the digital consumption of movies to grow in the country in recent years. This is mirrored by an average time of over three hours that Kenyans spend on YouTube.

The ability of YouTube to stream films that are culturally, aesthetically and artistically varied movie, as well as the availability of affordable broadband internet in the country, has further accelerated the large scale shift of consumers towards YouTube screening of movies in the

country. Features such as the ability to download and watch offline later with broadband internet getting cheaper day by day increasing consumption of movies on the YouTube platform.

Local film producers from different parts of the country are also marketing their movies on YouTube, where their target audience can easily find them through the use of advanced marketing employed by the YouTube algorithms. What De-Aguilera-Mayano et al, observe that:

Algorithms and their social power abound; and, more specifically, their impact on the choice of videos among the millions deposited in the gigantic repository that constitutes *YouTube*. One of the most important uses of the algorithm includes the recommendations of videos that *YouTube* makes based on social consumption and the previous behaviour of the identified users or in response to the questions they ask the platform. (2)

The algorithms have enabled YouTube to attract and retain consumers on their platforms. Since consumers can easily get the movies they are searching for as well as new recommendations of the latest movie that matched their taste based on the previous search and consumption of motion pictures on the platform. Rodgers noted that the more reinvention takes place the more rapidly an innovation is adopted (Sahin 4) as the way YouTube has been adopted by the majority of Kenyans as a source of motion picture consumption.

Thus, I argue that YouTube has transformed the exhibition landscape in Kenya, its ability to exhibit a variety of movies as well as offer tailor-made recommendations of movies has led to its adoption and diffusion in the country. It has further liberalized the exhibition of film in Kenya through the democratisation of exhibition in Kenya. Its disruptive nature has been manifested by the slow decline of DVD and Television consumption of movies in recent years.

3.2.2. Netflix

Initiated in the late 1990s during the dotcom boom. Netflix was among the first companies to leverage digital technologies to exhibit movies to the audience. It popularizes home streaming of movies through its acquisition of original films and enticing of its customers with a tailor-made

recommendation. The entry of Netflix in Kenya transformed the exhibition landscape in the country, especially the cable television industry. What Anton Parlow and Sabrina Wagner in their article *Netflix and the Demand for Cinema Tickets - An Analysis for 19 European Countries* that “The entering of Netflix in video markets has been seen for many in the popular press as a direct threat to the established TV landscape but also for some (e.g. Bloomberg, CNBC) as a threat for (mainstream) cinema.” (1)

In Kenya, I observe that the arrival of Netflix in Kenya in 2017, has tilted the consumption of motion picture especially the cable Television. Netflix’s affordability and huge database of different genres of movies, which you can stream anywhere at any time in any screen as long as you are connected to the internet, has led to a seismic shift in television industry landscape in Kenya. Dstv, the largest pay television in Kenya, slashed its monthly subscriptions as a result of the adjustment brought by Netflix’s entry in Kenya. Ngugi notes that:

Dstv...slash its monthly payment between five to thirty per cent. The company's move is seen as its latest bid to protect its customer base in the face of increasing competition as home Internet connections from providers such as Wananchi Group and Safaricom push up demand for on-the-go streaming services such as YouTube, Netflix and MultiChoice's Showmax (Ngugi)

The price cuts by Dstv and other television stations downsizing their motion pictures content productions are the upshot of Netflix revolutionizing the screening sector of motion pictures in the country. Also, consumers’ shift to online streaming for movies as well as getting information, the role of television over the last decade has forced television industry in Kenya to adopt digital innovations. The entry of Netflix forces the cable television, Dstv, to reduce its price to remain competitive. It also leads to the creation of Showmax and Viusasa online video demand services exhibiting locally produced movies. Both videos on demand were owned by television stations.

Thus, the arrival of Netflix leads to the creation of indigenous online video exhibition platforms to exhibit native video titles that were not exhibited on Netflix.

3.3 Social Media film Consumption

The government of Kenya's vision of "A nation where every citizen, enterprise and organization has digital access and the capability to participate and thrive in the digital economy." (MoICT 7) and its intensification of digitisation of government services over the years has led to the proliferation of the use of digital innovations in various sectors in the country. With many sectors of economy leveraging on digital innovations for efficiency and maximization of profits. Social media platforms have become the fulcrum of digital evolution in the country. With ever-rising of Kenyan population using social media platforms to get information and entertainment.

Social media platforms have transformed the Kenyan population over the years in term of screening of movie contents, remodeling how people, societies and corporations generate, disseminate and consume information. It has also radically altered the entertainment industry by generating new channels of consumption of motion pictures. This has led to the breaking of barriers such as geographical barriers that hindered prompt entertainment through permitting live streaming of entertainment events as well distributing of entertainment to consumers. With over 88% per cent of Kenyans using social media platforms (SIMELab 12), this is a manifestation that majority of Kenyans are consuming motion picture contents through platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Telegram and Tik-Tok. The film industry in Kenya is not immune to this revolution brought by social media platforms in the country.

This has fueled the proliferation of streaming of films through social media platforms, as a staple avenue of motion picture consumption in the country. The diffusion of the use of social media can be attributed to the government promoting its use. The rate of adoption of innovation

hinges on the transmission channels among sources, where sources can be individual or government that diffuse the innovation (Scott and McGuire 121). The government, over recent years, has been a source of promotion of digital technologies in the country salient to increased adoption of social media platforms as an indispensable source of movie streaming over the years. Research by SIMELab Africa acknowledges that 28% of Kenyans use social media as entertainment (13), an expression that majority of Kenyans consume motion picture contents through social media platforms.

Affordable and efficient broadband internet, as well as affordability of internet-enabled mobile phone devices that has mushroomed the market over the years has enabled the people to access the internet to stream movies on social media platforms. Research by Communication Authority of Kenya posits that internet subscriptions was at 45.7 million in 2019. While the vast majority accessing the internet through mobile phones (CAK 5). This is an indication that the majority of Kenyans get connected through the internet via their mobile phones. Smartphone applications have enabled social media platforms to optimize their smartphones to stream motion picture content efficiently. The result has been an increase in the adoption of social media platforms as an avenue for movie streaming and downloading films hence streamlining how motion picture is consumed in the in recent years.

As the millennial generation reaches their early twenties as they transition into adulthood, this generation is becoming the world's most energetic group of social media users. They are exposed to mass media forms like movies as well as visual art from all around the world, this has greatly influenced their habits and preferences of consumption of movies thereby fueling the diffusion of watching movies through social media, through recommending to friends and family members' social media platforms. The millennials in Kenya help in the spread of using social

media as a medium of film consumption in Kenya. Additionally, the availability of smartphones equipped with capabilities to broadcast high definition videos have resulted in a surge in the use of social media platforms over the years. The consequence has been the decline in consumption of motion picture on the traditional mediums which threatens the traditional mediums of consumption of motion picture with elimination.

The marketing and promotion of motion pictures content on social media platforms such as Facebook do embolden users to watch films as acknowledged by Flynn.

Social media, in general, has changed the landscape for conversation online given the fact that users can discuss hot-button issues with large numbers of people in real-time. This aspect of social media plays a significant role in the promotion of new films, particularly after a film is released (96)

Rafiki, a controversial film in Kenya, received the high number of cinema theatre attendance during its exhibition in the theatre halls, a rare occurrence in Kenya Cinema Theatres for local film titles. This was as a result of the buzz created by the social media platforms after its release, from trending on Twitter to Facebook and YouTube. Kimuyu opines that:

The high demand for tickets of the lesbian-themed film forced theatres to triple the screen at other theatres in Kisumu and Mombasa. Initially, it was only to be screened once a day at Prestige Cinema. But IMAX eventually comes on board and screen it. *Rafiki* becomes the first Kenyan film to be screened at the Cannes Film Festivals and would go on to be screened at several festivals around the world. (Kimuyu)

The high demand for *Rafiki* film was as a result of its controversy creating a buzz in social media from Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. The court cases also made the traditional media to market it indirectly as a news item in the prime time news, thus unknowingly creating the high demand for consumption of *Rafiki* film in the theatres around the country. Despite the fact that the film, *Rafiki*, was glorifying homosexuality that is a taboo in Kenya, the screening of *Rafiki* turned out to be colourful as many Kenyans turned out in colours that supported the LGBTQ as Kimuyu noted.

Moreover, social media platforms have been vital in the marketing and exhibition of motion pictures in Kenya. Ken Adongo, a Kisumu based film producer, uses social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter to market his film during production, through posting behind the scenes. He affirms that advertising film on television is quite expensive, especially during the prime time, where the most target audience will be reached, while social media like Facebook enable him to directly advertise his movies to his target audience at no cost. The result has been increased audience attendance during the film release as he attested by his movie *Hotel Momboleo* which attracted more than 500 people during its screening at Kisumu sovereign Hotel.

Moreover, Ministry of Sports, Culture, and The Arts in its *National Film Report, 2015*, asserts that lack of structured marketing and distribution channels in the Kenyan Film Industry is an existential threat to the Kenyan Film Industry (16). This has resulted in poor consumption of home-grown films over the years. However, social media platforms have provided a marketing solution to film producers. Social media platforms have the ability to foster the most amount of conversation, creating a buzz within a movie, which tends to be the highest driving force for the audience to watch the movie. Moreover, the digital platform itself that the social media platforms are based on tends to stimulate the audience to dynamically seek information regarding the film as opposed to other forms of marketing films. Thus, social media platforms in Kenya have enabled marketing and increased screening of native films online.

Social media giant, Facebook, launched Facebook *Watch* 2017 as a streaming site for movies which is a manifestation that more people are consuming films on social media platforms. It (Facebook watch) has transformed Facebook from just sharing and broadcasting your experiences into streaming movies. In 2018, 400 million users broadcast motion pictures on

Facebook watch with the viewing of an average 25 million hours of video every day (Blackburn et al 33) : a sign that film consumers are shifting to social media platforms for streaming of movies globally with the diffusion rate of Facebook at 88.5% of people in Kenya (SIMELab 18). This shows that the traditional medium of screening movies is being disrupted by Facebook platforms as more people are shifting to Facebook to stream movies.

The smartphones revolution and availability of affordable broadband internet in the country offered by the telecom companies, has fueled social media consumption of motion picture. World Economic Forum observes that the mobile phones as the new theatre of screening film as they note that:

People now spend an average of two hours daily on the mobile web, one- third of their total online time, with millennials and digital media users in emerging countries leading the mobile revolution. The obvious advantages are that mobile usage is less dependent on place and time, and devices are affordable than laptops/personal computer. (5)

Facilitating democratisation of motion picture screening through the smartphone, tablet, and personal computer avenues with social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Motion picture consumers are now hyper-connected to social media platforms thence opening new ways of viewing films; allowing movie viewing to be accessible in rural areas of the country; steering the creation of content by producers in Kenya who produce a sequel of movies based on the trending events in the country.

Social media platforms' use of algorithms and search engines have transformed audience demands, through customization way of enjoying entertainment with freedom of choice, unlimited access and high-grade flexibility and portability as demonstrated by Facebook's sophisticated marketing tool. This has aided the increased consumption of motion pictures on social media platform. Facebook and Twitter have been reinvented by local film producers as a marketing tool

for their films produced in vernacular language to reach their target audience, benefiting the Kenyan film industry that had barriers in screening film produced in the local language through traditional mediums.

Furthermore, social media platforms have resulted in increased content creation of motion pictures both by the amateurs and professional filmmakers hence sanctioning the Kenyan Film Industry to have a diversity of film produced in different parts of the country. It has also increased the consumption of home-grown motion pictures due to the diversity of local movies screened through social media platforms. However, social media has also led to an oversupply of movies as World Economic Forum asserts that:

Social media platforms offer more content than can be consumed, much of it for free, a consumer's willingness to pay remains a key challenge for the industry. Several studies on consumer readiness to pay for Facebook in exchange for no advertising, for example, found little appetite for it. (16)

Social media platforms like Telegram, and Facebook have plenty of content of motion pictures, that are consumed freely. This has contributed to the high demand for consumption of motion pictures with little appetite to pay for the motion picture. Screen Australia affirms that indeed: "The challenge for independent feature film distributors today is monetizing feature films in a time of content abundance, when audiences expect everything to be everywhere, and where there is a diminishing appetite to pay for content." (4)

Social media platforms have threatened the elimination of traditional mediums of screening movies. Majority of them offer free, high rated movies, they are flexible and convenient compared to the conventional mediums of film exhibition. Christensen describes the phenomenon as:

Disruptive technologies under-perform established products in mainstream markets. But they have other features that a few fringe (and generally new) customers value. Products based on disruptive technologies are typically cheaper, simpler, smaller, and, frequently,

more convenient to use. They bring to a market a very different value proposition than had been available previously. (11)

Social media platforms stream movies for free with private consumption of movies at the comfort of your phones making them convenient compared to the traditional mediums of film consumption. You need not to go to the movie theatre to watch a movie or walk to rental shops to buy your favourite movie. These factors have made traditional mediums of consumption to look outdated leading to diminishing appetite to watch the film in the traditional mediums.

Sharing of experiences on social media platforms has also transformed consumers' behaviours towards watching movies as an experience rather than an entertainment process that needs to be paid for. They (Facebook, Twitter, and Vimeo) are places of shared experiences for free, this has transformed the consumer's attitude towards paying for movies for screening in the traditional medium. Once consumers have to watch a film, they download it to share the experience with their friends too. The communal spirit in which content is created in social media platforms without people expecting pay has increased digital piracy over the years.

Besides, the arrival of social media has changed the television industry, as more audience are attracted to the new platforms at the expense of Televisions. According to the Media Council of Kenya in its report, *The Impact of digital technologies and the Internet on Media and Journalism in Kenya* observe that:

The modes of media production, distribution and consumption have been affected as well as transformed by digital technologies. The appropriation of mobile technologies by media businesses is opportunistic but hugely appropriate as media houses seek to respond to economic, business and market challenges and audience demands. (11)

Social media platforms have contributed to the shift as more people get information as well as entertainment. It has transformed consumers' habits and demands leading to the decline in television consumption. The consequence has been more people adopting social media platforms

to get news and entertainment at the expense of television, attracting advertisers as well on social media platforms at the expense of Televisions.

Television model of business is based on the advertisement of products to generate revenues, however, digital innovations are cannibalizing on their profits, as well as offering tailor-made advertisement services using their algorithms that have attracted advertisers over the years at the expense of televisions houses. The new market created by social media platforms has created a new medium for advertisers as well as motion picture consumers. Christensen and Raynor define the phenomenon as a new market disruption where, "New-market disruptive products are so much more affordable to own and simpler to use that they enable a whole new population of people to begin owning and using the product, and to do so in a more convenient setting." (56)

Therefore, I have argued that social media platforms are convenient, affordable and offer tailor-made entertainment compared to televisions. The ability to stream entertainment and news on the go on digital innovations platforms has made television to look obsolete. The shift in consumption of entertainment and getting news online have led to a drastic fall in watching motion pictures content on Television in recent years. The upshot has been social media platforms cannibalizing on traditional mediums of screening of movies by offering an abundance of movies for free. It is also used for marketing purposes which have increased consumption of indigenous film over the years. This has ushered the Kenyan film industry into a new epoch of digitization of consumption of movies

3.4 Peer to Peer File Sharing and Digital Piracy

Revolutionary innovations in the distribution of motion pictures over the years are enabling consumers to access the movie streaming virtually in any connected device on the internet anywhere as well as any time. Online video consumption has been in increased with more

subscriptions to the movie streaming sites. The opening of Netflix office in Nairobi in 2017 in addition to increased fibre connection in neighbourhoods/estates by telecom companies is a manifestation that online streaming is on demand. However, this eruption of watching film online in the country has also fueled digital piracy as criminal actors take advantage of digital innovations and film consumers' behaviours to disseminate bootlegged films online. Salient to mushrooming of illegitimate streaming sites coupled up with peer to peer file sharing innovations have accelerated digital piracy on the internet over the years.

The internet has become a core fountain of streaming movies as a new generation of technology-savvy viewers' desires refine and tailor motion picture content, essentially changing traditional business economics, salient with the accelerating shift in consumption of motion picture in the digital platforms. For instance, the world Trade Organization posit that:

The past half-century has seen a massive increase in processing and computing power, an equally enormous decline in its cost, and the widespread adoption of personal computers. This has been accompanied by an equally rapid increase in bandwidth – the carrying capacity of a communication system – which has proved to be an important catalyst for the swift growth of the internet and mobile networks. (6)

This has permitted consumers to watch the film on the internet as well as download it to watch it later and even share with their friends. The proliferation of computers, smartphones and high-speed internet connections as well as technological innovations of peer to peer file sharing, with the capability to enable computers as well as smartphones to connect to share data files efficiently have revolutionised consumption of motion pictures on the digital platforms.

The file-sharing platforms, as well as streaming sites, have been modified by users as a source of illegitimately downloading movies and as a source of watching pirated movies. "Reinvention may involve both innovations as a tool and in its use. Thus, the same technological innovation may be put to a different use than originally intended." (Rice and Rodgers, 501).

Though file-sharing platforms are legal, it is their recodification to copy and share illegal movies that have sped up digital film piracy in recent years.

Online video piracy continues to be an essential avenue of motion pictures piracy, cannibalising on film revenues. Blackburn et al. His research on *Impacts of Digital Video Piracy on the U.S Economy* observes that:

Video distribution technologies are shifting rapidly in the direction of video streaming: there are now more than 500 licensed online video portals worldwide and more subscribers to subscription streaming services than traditional pay-TV. The nature of online piracy has evolved as well: Just a few years ago, it was estimated that BitTorrent downloads accounted for nearly 40% of digital video piracy, but recent research indicates that more than 80% is now attributable to streaming. This new piracy ecosystem has been boosted by the proliferation of piracy devices and apps that deliver unauthorized live television shows and videos on-demand over the internet and directly to the television set. (1)

The new theatre of operation of digital piracy has shifted from file-sharing platforms to applications that stream on the internet directly to people's laptops, phones and televisions. It is such an evolution of digital piracy that is threatening the film industry all over the world with the continued mushrooming of illegal film streaming sites on the internet. This indicates that consumers are shifting towards streaming sites more compared to file sharing sites as a result of modification of streaming sites to cater for the huge demand of consumers who want to watch illegal movies on the internet.

Moreover, the mushrooming of illegal streaming sites, as well as file-sharing platforms, have boosted, fueled and propelled movie consumers to have freedom of procuring movie contents without purchasing it as long as they are connected to the internet by circumventing authorized medium of distribution channels. The consequence has been consumers flocking illegal streaming sites and file-sharing platforms to download as well as watch films freely, thus, contributing to the decline of sales of motion pictures as Goal, et al. observe:

Video piracy is increasing with greater availability of high-speed internet connections and more efficient software for sharing larger files. This activity directly affects the market for Home Video, now the largest source of revenues for the motion picture industry over the years. (6)

Blackburn et al. further affirm that:

Legal streaming access has proliferated, so has digital piracy, as criminal actors adapt to take advantage of new technologies and consumer behaviours. Research indicates that more than 80% of piracy is attributable to streaming. Illegal streaming is enabled by piracy devices and apps, which have overtaken BitTorrent and other download-based technologies. (i)

However, piracy has always existed as part of the circulation of films as Crisp illustrates that: "Piracy is not a modern phenomenon and that its networks of distribution have always coexisted and often been interconnected with the official circulation of goods". (76) This is the space which Kenya film industry has inhabited over the years. The informal nature of film distribution has always fostered movies' piracy.

Additionally, the freedom at which consumers can download movies, and share with friends on various platforms has changed the Kenyan film industry with increased piracy that has never been witnessed before as KPMG points out:

Most pirates worldwide depend on the Internet for acquiring and distributing unauthorized content. Widespread piracy began concurrently with the emergence of the Internet as a medium for free and uncontrolled global interactivity—and the industries affected by this sea change are scrambling to redefine their businesses. (2)

The Kenyan film industry has not been immune to these radical changes brought by the internet in the consumption of films. It has indeed fueled and boosted democratisation of piracy films, with the ease at which you stream movies online on the illegal streaming sites as well as download them in file-sharing platforms without any restrictions, as long as you are connected to the internet.

In addition, the lightning speed at which the movie can be disseminated and circulated on file-sharing platforms, breaking the geographical barriers that once hindered the film's movement has given people freedom to broadcast the movies and circulate it once they have downloaded as Zhang points out that:

The suppliers upload illegal copies of movies and the consumers download these movies using a technology called “torrenting”. The upload and download process is done on two-way platforms called file sharing sites. These file-sharing sites are essentially the major “firms” within this industry, facilitating content upload and distribution. (1)

Furthermore, the file-sharing platforms are threatening motion picture exhibitors with elimination as they eat revenue streams for exhibitors. With the ease of sharing movies once downloaded, individuals access movies, watch it, then share it offline with friends, by copying the movies on laptops, flash disks, and/or on friends’ phones. Thus, File-sharing technology innovation is the hallmark of technological disruption in the film value chain, with ease at which it has democratized film piracy on the internet by copying and sharing of films to an unprecedented extent making it to grow tremendously in tandem with the reinvention of its use among the people in Kenya.

The increase in piracy activity as a result of file-sharing platforms innovation is threatening the home video market distributors and exhibitors with elimination. As more consumers access movies through the file-sharing platforms and share with other people once downloaded offline, this is cannibalizing on local exhibitors’ revenues, resulting in the decline of film consumption of DVDs. Movie shops are grappling with imminent collapse as a result of increased movie piracy drastically wiping out their revenue threatening to drive them out of the business. It is with this critical eye, that I address the accelerating disruption of file sharing innovation in the distribution and consumption of motion picture in Kenya. Christensen refers to this phenomenon as new market disruption attracting new customers who lack the money to buy the product as He illustrates it as:

New-Market disruptions target “non-consumers” who are now able to use these innovations, as they are more affordable and easier to use than previous products. Both of these types of disruptions gradually improve until they have enough performance to appeal to mainstream consumers. (Frohman, 20)

A study done in 2017 indicates that 26,4% of Kenyans have not watched movies at all in the cinema, on DVD or CD (Centumre 11). An indication that the majority of Kenyans consume motion pictures on digital platforms. This justifies the mushrooming of file sharing and streaming platforms in Kenya which has occasioned democratisation of piracy on the online video exhibition platform by consumers.

Diang'a 2007, KFC 2011, Nyutho 2015, Nguma, 2015, Ng'ang'a 2015, and Wamalwa 2018 all emphasize that the existential threat to the film industry in Kenya is the increased piracy over the years. This has resulted in poor distribution as well as consumption of home-grown films as Diang'a elucidates:

Piracy in the entertainment industry’s greatest enemy from Hollywood to Nollywood to Bollywood and Kenya's film industry. Some think that piracy helps with distribution but my perspective is that it kills distribution. There are many production houses and filmmakers in the country yet most people have only watched only a few local film productions. In my opinion, the reason for this is that piracy has created a culture of fear for many producers and production companies. There are hundreds of films produced monthly if not weekly, but due to fear of piracy, most of these remain on laptops or end up being shown to a select few. (58)

Increased piracy through file-sharing platforms is threatening indigenous film producers to screen their content on digital platforms for fear of being pirated. This has resulted in poor consumption of local films eliciting the influx of foreign movies in the Kenyan market, which is readily available.

Peer to Peer File Sharing innovation in the distribution of motion pictures has also facilitated the ease of motion picture dissemination, circulation, and copying to different platforms.

Escalating piracy in the film industry in Kenya has been catastrophic. As one of the journalists affirms that:

Over the past few years, movie piracy in Nairobi has steadily gained momentum as more players move to cash –in on the lucrative underground industry. Development in technology has also led to the speedy growth of piracy as new and affordable duplication equipment enters the market(Sunday)

Most recreational areas, offices, and learning institutions are connected through fast internet with free Wi-Fi hotspots. Lobato elucidates that piracy always exists within the informal sector (198). Thus, the informal distribution nature of motion pictures in Kenya as well as technological advancement has increased the rate of piracy that has never been experienced before. Moreover, Digitization of motion pictures has revolutionized distribution, production, exhibition, and reception of films where films are no longer accessible through tightly controlled channels, such as the confines of the cinema theatres: where consumers screen motion pictures without owning it to redistribute later. This enables film producers to chronologically generate maximum revenue in those mediums of film exhibition in a film lifetime.

Therefore, I have argued that digital innovations have bypassed these distribution channels used to generate revenue directly to the producers. This shift has not affected the distribution channels but has a major ripple effect across the motion picture value system. As Gaustad contends that: “Online streaming services have quickly grown into leading market channels while former dominant channels, such as the physical DVD and Blu-ray formats, have been marginalized.” (67) The cannibalization of physical DVDs is the hallmark of disruption of innovation as these innovations bring new goods and services that exceed the incumbent goods and services leading to the slow decline of the latter.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter analyses the film exhibition in Kenya through the lens of digital technologies. Therefore, my focus has been on the impact of digital technologies on the consumption of motion pictures in the country. I began by mounting the argument that digital technologies have led to the resurgence of cinema theatre exhibition. This has been characterized by the installation of multiplex screens in the cinema theatres, fitted with state of the art screening technologies. I analyse how cinema theatres have been transformed as an avenue to experiencing film rather as a medium of the exhibition of the film. I also observe cinema exhibitors as developing a new business model to match the digital innovations. For instance, opening Cinema Theatres in the affluence Malls in Kenya. I conclude that the cinema theatres that were unable to digitize their theatres have well-been driven out of business as a result of technological disruption.

In my attempt to map the digital exhibition of film, I found out that digital technologies have shifted the film screening culture. From the social screening of movies in the cinema theatres and families watching the latest release of movies in televisions. To privatization of movie consumption based on tailored recommendations on people phones and tablets. Digital technologies have also led to the rise of film consumption from smartphones, tablets, and personal computers democratising film exhibition in Kenya as well as creating new mediums of film exhibition such as Netflix, Viusasa, YouTube and Showmax.

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Telegram have been at the forefront in marketing movies that has led to increased consumption of film in Kenya. The ability of social media users to screen movies anytime, anywhere to audience has resulted in film consumers having greater control over their cinematic experiences in different mediums of the exhibition. Furthermore, digital innovations have broken down barriers that existed in experiencing motion

picture consumption in different mediums of screens. This has resulted to the increase in the consumption of local film in the digital platforms over the years as well as fragmentation of the consumers along with the numerous digital platforms of exhibitions

Finally, I turned my attention to digital piracy as a result of peer to peer file sharing innovations. The ease to get and redistribute movie as is what I problematize as the democratisation of piracy. Digital piracy has hindered the growth of the film industry in Kenya, leading to the influx of foreign films in the market over the years. In summary, digital innovations in the exhibition of the motion picture have shifted the dynamics of film consumption in the country.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

4.0 Conclusion

This thesis has explored the transformation of distribution through the lens of technological disruption. Recent scholarships are in agreement that digital innovations have transformed various sectors in the Film Industry. Consequently, this study is a continuation of the trend, the research hypothesis was: digital technologies have impacted on the distribution of motion pictures, and digital technologies have influenced the exhibition of the motion pictures in Kenya. The objectives of the study were grounded upon technological disruption that have reverberated through the cultural shift in dissemination and consumption of movies in the country.

To answer the study objectives, this thesis has taken a multi-method approach. For instance, in terms of the theoretical framework, I have analyzed film dissemination and consumption through the realms of disruption of innovation theory and diffusion of innovation theory. That has allowed me to explore digital technologies through the lens of technological disruption in film consumption and transmission in the country. Throughout this study, I have examined the shift brought by digital technologies within the distribution landscape, and the diversity of new mediums of dispersion and consumption in the context technological disruption of film exhibition and distribution in the country.

In chapter two, I began by mounting an argument that indeed digital technologies have transformed film distribution through the perspective of historical dissemination of picture in Kenya. I argued that the film industry in Kenya has not been immune to surgical transformations

by digital innovations. Furthermore, the rapid adoption and diffusion of digital innovations in the film industry, have synchronized into a sweeping shift that constitutes a revolution - a digital revolution- that is fundamentally transforming film distribution in the country. For example, they have profoundly modified the way film is disseminated by directly distributing to consumers, thus, bypassing traditional mediums of film dissemination rendering them obsolete. It is through this angle of unprecedented technological disruption that I have analyzed the distribution of the film in the digital era.

I also find out that the DVD circulation has had a profound impact in Kenya Film industry. In particular, the creation of Riverwood as a hub of distribution of movies, creating the video shop culture in the country. I observe that its circulation has been dwindling over the years due to online video distribution. I also note that between 2000 to 2019, DVD distribution and subscription-based streaming services of movies have switched places as major and minor mediums for home video market in Kenya. This alteration has led to the marginalisation of DVD distribution in recent years. This has been manifested by closure of several movie distribution shops, (movie shops) that have mushroomed in the market during the video boom of DVD distribution. Therefore, digital innovations have re-modelled several facets of film distribution since its diffusion and adoption in the country as noted above.

In the context of digital technologies and film exhibition, this research investigated the effects of digital innovations in consumption of motion pictures in Kenya in chapter three. I observe that major shifts are being experienced in the consumption of films as a result of digital technologies. Due to the adoption and diffusion of digital innovations in the consumption of films in recent years. Additionally, this has had a paradigm shift in consumers' habits of screening movies. I find out that Cinema exhibition has been revolutionised by digital innovations by its

resurgence in recent years. In other words, the incorporation of multiplex cutting edge screens in cinema theatres, in particular, 3D,4D,7D AND 8D has added an aura in the cinema theatres. As a consequence, it has led to increasing cinema attendance in recent years. Furthermore, the location of cinema theatres in the high-end malls around the country with copacetic after-sale services has led to the resurgence of cinema theatres exhibition in the country.

I illustrated that proliferation of streaming sites of movies as well as online video distributions channels have fueled the adoption as well as the diffusion of digital technologies in the country. The availability of affordable broadband internet as well as fibre connections to the various neighbourhoods have further propelled digitisation of exhibition of motion pictures over the years. Online video exhibition has reduced various trade costs like transport and logistics costs (the cost of crossing borders and the cost of cross border payments). This has led to abundance of movies in the market, eliminating the need to watch movies in cinema theatres. This reduces the logistics of consumers physically walking to cinema theatres to watch films. I also observe that new mediums of film consumption (Netflix, YouTube, Viusasa and Showmax) are directly screening movies to consumers, eliminating the need for exhibitors.

I argued that digital innovation platforms of the exhibition of films have democratized piracy over the internet, to illustrate this, I look at proliferation of illegal file-sharing platforms, applications that have fueled film digital piracy in the country in recent years. Furthermore, the mushrooming of illegal streaming sites has created piracy menace in the Kenyan film industry. This has inhibited the growth and development of the film industry in the country.

I further argue that digital innovations have led to digital divides. For example, film consumers are fragmented among the numerous mediums of film streaming sites. In addition, quantitative analysis suggests that digital technologies has created a fragmented film audience due

to various platforms of film distribution. The extent of digital fragmentation will depend on the adoption and diffusion of various digital technologies of consumption of movies in the country. That is to say, the long term effect will be the elimination of traditional film exhibitors, what Zhu concludes is that:

The distribution of movies over the Internet will be likely to disintermediate the video rental stores. The video rental stores. Once streaming technology and the Internet evolve to the point where the quality of the streaming movies can compete with the quality of videotapes and DVDs, the need to rent physical videotapes will be seriously reduced. As the use of the Internet to distribute movies increases, traditional video rental and retail businesses such as Blockbuster would have to adapt to digital videos and change their business models, or else they will face the threat of being eliminated (276)

For instance, with the price of broadband internet decreasing day by day in the country, and increased diffusion and adoption of online video distribution platforms; these aforementioned factors have impacted the distribution and consumption of film witnessed through closing down of cinema theatres and movie shops in recent years.

Moreover, digital piracy, elimination of traditional mediums of distribution and exhibitions, are not only among several challenges raised by the advent of adoption of digital technologies in the Film Industry in Kenya. Concerns such as market concentrations, the massive collection of data, limiting competition as a result of collusive behaviour by consumers and cyber-attacks that can have disruptive economic effects on film revenue are also some of the challenges that have been brought by the digitisation of film in the country. I conclude that, given the cross-cutting effects of digital innovations, the government should progressively develop regulations taking into account the protection of the local film industry for film producers in Kenya to find the right balance between leveraging on digital innovations and monetizing their films products on digital platforms of dissemination and distribution.

4.1 Recommendations

Having established the impact of digital technologies in Film Distribution in Kenya, the study recommends that cinema theatres exhibitors should embrace digital innovations in the screening of motion picture. Moreover, the digital revolution has created the experience economy where consumers value experience rather than the medium. The embracing of digital innovations in screening, for example, 3D,4D as well as 7D in the cinema theatres will create an experience of watching a film in the cinema theatres. Leveraging on the digital innovations will be sustaining innovations to the cinema theatres rather than disruption. They can achieve these by optimizing their business models to embrace digital innovations of the exhibition as a linchpin to their business successes.

The government should also ban illegal film streaming sites, and illegal file sharing by blocking the sites to prevent easy access to these sites. This will reduce digital piracy which will promote film growth in Kenya. Film producers should leverage on the digital innovations to market and disseminate film effectively. On the other hand, the government should also construct cinema theatres in rural areas, this will promote cinema distribution that will minimize piracy and maximize revenues for local film producers. It will also formalize the distribution of film in the country, that has been largely informal over the years. Moreover, digital innovations have created opportunities and challenges that should be identified and evaluated by film industry stakeholders in the country to better be prepared to develop innovative solutions as well as strategies in an epoch of digital revolution that is transforming the country. Film producers need to come up with solutions that not only overcome current distribution challenges but also leverage digital technologies opportunities.

4.2 Suggestions for further studies

Distribution being an economical aspect of film where revenue is generated, film producers and distributors need access to up-to-date qualitative and quantitative research about the domestic market to make informed business and policy decisions. I, therefore, suggest further quantitative analysis on the impact of digital technologies in film distribution in the country. Also, Viusasa, as a Kenyan online video distribution medium that has revolutionised local film distribution in recent years should be given prominence. Clinical research exploring the impact of Viusasa on local film production and distribution will be useful to the film industry.

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