

Film Criticism and Analysis in the Digital Era: Role of Online Platforms

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Abstract

The digital era has revolutionized numerous facets of contemporary life, and film criticism is no exception. Traditionally confined to the pages of newspapers and specialized journals, film criticism has found new life on the internet, where online platforms have democratized and diversified the field. Today, anyone with a keen eye for cinema and an internet connection can publish reviews and analyses, challenging the dominance of established critics and broadening the discourse around film. This shift has not only expanded the audience for film criticism but also transformed the ways in which films are analyzed and discussed. The advent of the digital era has profoundly transformed film criticism, shifting the landscape from traditional print media to dynamic online platforms. Anchored on the technological determinism theory, this paper explores the role of these platforms in reshaping film criticism and analysis. Online platforms such as blogs, social media, and dedicated film websites have democratized the field, allowing a diverse array of voices to participate in the discourse. These platforms provide immediacy and interactivity, enabling rapid responses to new releases and fostering vibrant discussions. Furthermore, the integration of multimedia elements like video essays and podcasts offers a more immersive critique, enhancing traditional written reviews. However, this democratization also presents challenges, including the proliferation of content, the difficulty of discerning credible voices, and the polarization of online discourse. Despite these issues, the influence of online platforms is undeniable, representing a significant evolution in film criticism. This paper examines the

opportunities and challenges presented by these digital mediums, highlighting their impact on how films are reviewed, interpreted, and appreciated in the contemporary era.

Key Words: *Digital Era, Film Criticism, Online Platforms*

Introduction

The advent of the digital era has revolutionized numerous facets of human interaction, culture, and economy, with film criticism and analysis being no exception (Haynes, 2023). Traditionally, film criticism was dominated by established critics and published in newspapers, magazines, and academic journals. However, the rise of online platforms has democratized this field, allowing for a more diverse range of voices and perspectives to be heard. This shift has not only expanded the audience for film criticism but has also transformed the ways in which films are analyzed, discussed, and consumed (Arewa, 2023).

Bordwell and Thompson, (2023) assert that online platforms such as blogs, social media, and dedicated film review websites have provided critics, both professional and amateur, with new tools to disseminate their opinions and engage with audiences. This digital transformation has led to the proliferation of various formats of film criticism, from long-form essays and video reviews to interactive discussions and real-time social media commentary. Consequently, the role of film critics has evolved, with many embracing multimedia approaches to critique and analysis (MacDowell, 2023).

Moreover, the digital era has fostered greater engagement and participation from audiences, who now have the opportunity to interact directly with critics, filmmakers, and fellow film enthusiasts (Nussbaum, 2024). This interactive nature of online platforms has enriched the discourse surrounding films, enabling a more dynamic and collaborative form of criticism. However, it has also raised questions about the credibility and quality of criticism in an environment where anyone can voice their opinion.

This paper therefore aims to examine the impact of online platforms on film criticism and analysis, examining how these platforms have reshaped the landscape of film critique. It will analyze the benefits and challenges of digital film criticism, considering its influence on audience perceptions and the broader cultural implications. By investigating the role of online platforms, this study seeks to understand how the digital era has transformed film criticism into a more accessible, diverse, and interactive practice.

Background on Film Criticism

According to Onyekwere (2023), film criticism is the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of films and their artistic, cultural, and social significance. As a multifaceted discipline, film criticism encompasses a range of methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and critical approaches. It has evolved alongside the medium of cinema itself, adapting to changes in technology, audience preferences, and cultural contexts (Koresky, 2024). Film criticism, as an academic and cultural discipline, has evolved significantly since the inception of cinema in the late 19th century (Uche, 2024). Initially, film criticism was largely descriptive, focusing on summarizing plotlines and providing basic evaluations of new releases. However, as cinema developed into a major form of art and entertainment, the scope and depth of film criticism expanded, encompassing a wide range of theoretical, cultural, and aesthetic considerations. The origins of film criticism can be traced back to the early 20th century, with publications like *The Bioscope* and *Moving Picture World* in the United States, which provided early reviews and commentary on films (Hornaday, 2023). The

1920s and 1930s saw the emergence of more serious critical engagement, with figures such as Siegfried Kracauer and Rudolf Arnheim contributing foundational theoretical works (Tryon, 2013). These early critics began to explore the unique language of cinema, analyzing elements such as montage, mise-en-scène, and narrative structures.

According to Haynes, (2023), in the post-World War II era, film criticism underwent a significant transformation. The rise of auteur theory, championed by critics from the French film magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma*, including André Bazin and François Truffaut, shifted the focus towards the director as the central creative force in filmmaking. This period also saw the establishment of influential film journals, such as *Sight & Sound* and *Film Quarterly*, which provided platforms for more rigorous and scholarly approaches to film criticism.

Tryon, (2013), states that the 1960s and 1970s marked a period of diversification in film criticism, with the advent of various critical frameworks such as structuralism, semiotics, psychoanalysis, and Marxist theory. Critics like Christian Metz, Laura Mulvey, and Peter Wollen introduced new ways of understanding and interpreting films, considering broader socio-political contexts and the role of ideology in cinema. During this period, feminist film criticism emerged as a significant movement, challenging traditional representations of gender in film and advocating for more inclusive and diverse perspectives (Jenkins, 2006). Laura Mulvey's seminal essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) critiqued the male gaze and introduced concepts that remain central to contemporary feminist film theory (Newmann, 2011).

Film criticism in Nigeria has a rich and evolving history, paralleling the development of the Nigerian film industry, known as Nollywood. Nollywood is one of the largest film industries in the world, and its rapid growth since the early 1990s has significantly influenced the landscape of film criticism in the country (Adesokan, 2019). Nigerian film criticism encompasses a wide array of perspectives, reflecting the diverse cultural, social, and political context of the nation (Okoye, 2018).

Early Beginnings

According to Adejumobi (2020), the roots of Nigerian film criticism can be traced back to the post-colonial era, particularly the 1960s and 1970s, when the Nigerian film industry was still in its infancy. During this period, film production was largely dominated by adaptations of stage plays and the influence of Western and Indian cinema. Criticism was mainly conducted by cultural commentators, journalists, and academics who wrote for newspapers, magazines, and academic journals (Arewa, 2023). These early critics focused on evaluating the narrative and aesthetic quality of films, often comparing them to Western standards.

The advent of Nollywood in the early 1990s marked a significant turning point for Nigerian film criticism (Okome, 2014). Nollywood's emergence was characterized by low-budget, direct-to-video productions that quickly gained immense popularity both domestically and internationally. This boom created a new landscape for film criticism, as critics now had to contend with a high volume of films produced in quick succession, often with varying degrees of technical and narrative quality (Adesokan, 2019).

Uche, (2024) opines that early Nollywood critics were instrumental in documenting the industry's rapid growth and its impact on Nigerian society. They addressed issues such as the representation of Nigerian culture, the economic potential of the industry, and the challenges of maintaining quality amidst rapid production schedules. Publications like *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, and *Punch* newspapers, as well as specialized film magazines, became important platforms for film criticism during this period (Onyekwere, 2023). Academic institutions in Nigeria also played a crucial role

in the development of film criticism. Scholars from disciplines such as media studies, literature, and cultural studies have contributed to a deeper understanding of Nollywood through research and critical analysis (Arewa, 2023). University programs in film studies and media have fostered a new generation of critics who approach Nollywood from various theoretical perspectives, including postcolonial theory, gender studies, and African studies (Adejunmobi, 2020).

Evolution of film criticism from traditional media to digital platforms

Film criticism has undergone profound changes from its early days in print media to the dynamic and multifaceted landscape of digital platforms. This transformation reflects broader shifts in media consumption, technological advancements, and cultural trends (Haynes, 2023). Film criticism emerged alongside the rise of cinema in the early 20th century (MacDowell, 2023). Initially, reviews appeared in newspapers and magazines, serving as a bridge between the film industry and audiences. Critics such as Frank E. Woods in the United States and Louis Delluc in France were among the pioneers, setting the groundwork for film critique as a serious and influential genre (Koresky, 2024). The Mid-20th Century marked the emergence of iconic critics like Pauline Kael (*The New Yorker*), Andrew Sarris (*The Village Voice*), and Roger Ebert (*Chicago Sun-Times*). Their reviews had a significant impact on public opinion and could influence box office performance (Bordwell, 2018). In Nigeria, Film criticism has a rich history that parallels the growth of the country's film industry, known as Nollywood. As Nigeria's film industry developed, so did the critical discourse surrounding it (Arewa, 2023).

Emergence of Film Criticism in Nigeria: Colonial and Post-Colonial Periods

During the colonial era, film criticism in Nigeria was influenced by British colonialists who introduced Western films and their modes of critique (Okome, 2014). Early Nigerian newspapers and magazines, such as the *West African Pilot* and the *Daily Times*, occasionally featured reviews and discussions of both Western and indigenous films. The colonial era in Nigeria, spanning from the late 19th century to 1960, saw the introduction of Western cultural elements, including cinema (Ekwuazi, 2017). Film criticism during this period was in its nascent stage and was influenced significantly by British colonial perspectives. The British colonial administration introduced cinema to Nigeria primarily as a means of promoting Western values and showcasing British culture (Adesokan, 2019). Films were shown in urban centers and mission schools, often accompanied by a Western-centric narrative. Okoye (2018) opines that while the primary purpose was propagandistic, the exposure to cinema sparked interest and curiosity among Nigerians, leading to the early stages of local engagement with film.

Early Platforms for Film Criticism and Analysis

- **Colonial Newspapers:** According to Adejunmobi, (2020), British-run newspapers and publications were the initial platforms where film reviews and critiques began to appear. The *Lagos Weekly Record* which was one of the earliest newspapers, occasionally featured reviews of films shown in Lagos. These reviews were typically brief and focused on the entertainment value from a colonial viewpoint. Again, Uche (2024) asserts that the *Daily Times* which was established in 1926, became a significant platform for film-related content, including reviews and advertisements for cinema screenings. The tone was largely influenced by British tastes and preferences. These publications often reflected the colonial mindset and priorities, focusing on British and American films.

- **Local Publications:** Emerging Nigerian-run newspapers also started to include sections on arts and entertainment, though film criticism was not yet a central focus (Onyekwere, 2023). Publications like the West African Pilot, founded by Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1937, began to carve out space for local voices and perspectives (Arewa, 2023). This newspaper played a crucial role in the pre-independence era by promoting African nationalism and cultural identity. It occasionally featured film reviews and critiques, highlighting the need for locally relevant content. Although primarily a South African publication, the Nigerian edition of the drum magazine also included film reviews and articles that resonated with local audiences, providing a more balanced view compared to strictly colonial publications.

Notable Early Critics

- **African Intellectuals:** Ekwuazi, (2017) states that figures like Nnamdi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo, although not primarily film critics, contributed to the cultural discourse through their writings, encouraging a critical perspective on Western cultural imports. Although primarily known as a playwright and Nobel laureate, Wole Soyinka contributed to the discourse on Nigerian cinema through his critical essays and reviews. His insights often connected film to broader cultural and political themes (Adesokan, 2019). As a prominent journalist and scholar, Ogunbiyi wrote extensively on Nigerian theatre and film, providing critical perspectives that helped shape the early film criticism landscape (Adejunmobi, 2020)
- **Missionary Educators:** Okoye (2018) avers that some missionary educators, who were influential in early Nigerian education, also wrote about films. Their critiques often focused on the moral and educational aspects of cinema.

Development of Film Criticism and Analysis in Nigeria Post-Independence

According to Okome, (2014), the period following Nigeria's independence in 1960 marked a significant shift in the cultural and media landscape of the country. Film criticism began to evolve, reflecting the newfound sense of national identity and cultural pride (Haynes, 2023). This period saw an increased focus on Nigerian stories and the development of a local film industry. Print media began to reflect this shift, with more space dedicated to reviewing and critiquing Nigerian films. Following independence, there was a proliferation of Nigerian-run newspapers and magazines. Publications such as The Guardian, Nigerian Tribune, and later on, magazines like Spear and Drum (the Nigerian edition), provided platforms for more diverse and locally relevant film criticism (Uche, 2024). Again, with the establishment of universities and the growth of academia, film studies and criticism began to find a place in academic journals. These publications allowed for more in-depth and scholarly critiques of Nigerian cinema.

Transition of Film Criticism and Analysis to Digital Platforms

The transition of film criticism and analysis to digital platforms marks a significant shift in the landscape of film discourse. This evolution has democratized film criticism, broadened the audience reach, and diversified the voices contributing to the conversation (Hornaday, 2023). The transition of film criticism and analysis to digital platforms has been a significant cultural and technological shift in the way films are reviewed, discussed, and appreciated (Koresky, 2024). This transformation has not only democratized film criticism but also diversified the voices and perspectives available to the public. The digital age has revolutionized many aspects of media and communication, and film criticism is no exception. According to MacDowell (2023), for much of

the 20th century, film criticism was dominated by a select group of critics who wrote for newspapers, magazines, and journals. These critics, such as Roger Ebert, Pauline Kael, and Andrew Sarris, were influential gatekeepers who shaped public opinion and industry standards. Their reviews were often seen as authoritative, and their insights could significantly impact a film's success or failure at the box office. Bordwell and Thompson (2023) assert that traditional film criticism was characterized by in-depth analysis, historical context, and a strong emphasis on the auteur theory, which focused on the director's role as the primary creative force behind a film. Critics often had formal training in film studies or journalism, and their work was published in prestigious outlets, reaching a wide but relatively passive audience (Nussbaum, 2024).

The internet's rise in the late 20th and early 21st centuries began to disrupt this established order. Websites and blogs emerged as new platforms for film criticism, offering a space for voices outside the mainstream media (Hornaday, 2023). According to Bordwell and Thompson (2023), early adopters included sites like Ain't It Cool News, founded by Harry Knowles in 1996, which combined insider news with a fan-centric approach to reviews and commentary. The digital realm allowed for a more immediate and interactive form of criticism. Unlike print media, where there could be significant delays between a film's release and the publication of reviews, online platforms enabled real-time reactions and discussions. This immediacy was further enhanced by the rise of social media, where platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and later Instagram allowed critics and audiences alike to share their opinions instantaneously (Koresky, 2024).

The Rise of Blogging and User-Generated Content

Blogging democratized film criticism further, enabling anyone with an internet connection and a passion for movies to publish their thoughts. This shift brought a wider range of perspectives and styles, from academic analysis to personal reflections and fan reviews. Haynes (2023) opines that the blogosphere flourished with sites like The Film Experience, Slashfilm, and Film School Rejects, which offered a blend of professional and amateur critiques.

User-generated content platforms like YouTube took this democratization to new heights. Video essays became a popular format, blending traditional film analysis with visual and auditory elements that print criticism could not offer (Okoye, 2018). Channels like Every Frame a Painting, Lindsay Ellis, and Nerdwriter1 gained substantial followings by providing insightful, engaging, and accessible film analysis (Bordwell and Thompson, 2023).

The advent of the internet in Nigeria during the late 1990s and early 2000s marked the beginning of a new era for film criticism. The proliferation of digital platforms—websites, blogs, and social media democratized access to film critiques and allowed for a more diverse range of voices to be heard (Ekwuazi, 2017). Several key factors underscore this transition:

Democratization of Film Criticism

The advent of digital platforms has lowered the barriers to entry for aspiring film critics. Traditional film criticism was dominated by a few elite critics writing for established newspapers and magazines. In contrast, digital platforms allow anyone with an internet connection to publish their thoughts on films (Nauusbaum, 2024). Websites like 'Rotten Tomatoes' and 'Metacritic' aggregate reviews from professional critics and amateurs alike, giving a more comprehensive overview of critical reception (MacDowell, 2023). Moreover, platforms like YouTube, personal blogs, and social media enable individuals to gain substantial followings based on the quality of their insights rather than their affiliation with a recognized publication (Koresky, 2024). With no space limitations, online reviews could delve deeper into analysis, providing more comprehensive

critiques (Hornaday, 2023). According to Bordwell and Thompson (2023), the 2000s saw the proliferation of personal blogs and independent review sites, facilitated by platforms like Blogger and WordPress. This democratization allowed a wider range of voices to emerge, from amateur enthusiasts to professional critics. Critics could cater to specific genres or themes, attracting dedicated readerships and fostering specialized communities (MacDowell, 2023).

Increased Audience Reach

Digital platforms have significantly expanded the reach of film criticism (Onyekwere, 2023). Traditional film criticism was geographically constrained, primarily reaching readers of specific newspapers or magazines. In contrast, digital criticism is accessible to a global audience (Okoye 2018). This has allowed for a more diverse range of perspectives and a greater cross-pollination of ideas. For instance, a film review blog in Nigeria can be read by audiences in the United States, Europe, and beyond, fostering a more interconnected and global film community (Bordwell and Thompson, 2023). The evolution of film criticism from traditional media to digital platforms has been a transformative journey, significantly influenced by the desire to reach broader audiences (Nussbaum, 2024). This shift has been particularly notable in Nigeria, where the burgeoning film industry, Nollywood, demands dynamic and widespread critical engagement (Arewa, 2023). Increased audience reach has been a pivotal factor in this transition, driving changes in the way film criticism is produced, consumed, and interacted with. Online platforms have dramatically increased the accessibility and reach of film criticism. Traditional film criticism was often limited by geographical boundaries and the distribution capacities of print media while online platforms can reach a global audience instantly, breaking down barriers and allowing for a more extensive and diverse readership (Uche, 2024). This expanded reach not only benefits critics, who can engage with a broader audience, but also readers, who gain access to a wider variety of critical voices and viewpoints (Haynes, 2023). The increased accessibility also means that niche films and independent productions can receive attention and analysis that they might not have garnered in a pre-internet era.

Diversification of Voices

Digital platforms have facilitated the inclusion of voices that were previously marginalized in traditional film criticism. Critics from diverse racial, gender, and socio-economic backgrounds can now share their perspectives on films, contributing to a richer and more inclusive discourse (Onyekwere, 2023). This diversification is particularly evident on platforms like YouTube, where creators like Lindsay Ellis and Patrick Willems offer in-depth film analysis that challenges mainstream narratives and highlights underrepresented viewpoints (Koresky, 2024). The shift of film criticism from traditional media to digital platforms has significantly impacted the landscape of cinematic discourse, especially in Nigeria. One of the most profound changes facilitated by this transition is the diversification of voices. Digital platforms have democratized film criticism, enabling a broader spectrum of perspectives and insights (Okoye, 2018). Historically, film criticism in Nigeria was dominated by a small group of critics writing for print media, such as newspapers and magazines. These critics, often part of the urban, educated elite, shaped the discourse around Nigerian cinema (Uche, 2024). While their contributions were invaluable, the limited number of voices meant that film criticism often lacked diversity in perspectives and interpretations (Haynes, 2023). Print media's high production and distribution costs restricted access to these critiques, confining them to a narrow audience. Additionally, the hierarchical nature of traditional media meant that only a few selected voices had the platform to express their

opinions, leaving many potential contributors unheard. Online platforms have provided a space for marginalized and underrepresented groups to express their viewpoints and contribute to the critical conversation. This diversity is essential for a more comprehensive understanding of cinema, as it ensures that multiple cultural, social, and political contexts are considered in the evaluation of films (Adesokan, 2019). For instance, platforms like 'Nollywood Reinvented' have given Nigerian cinema a dedicated space for critique and analysis, highlighting regional films that might otherwise be overlooked by mainstream Western critics. This diversification enriches the field of film criticism, fostering a more nuanced and inclusive dialogue (Okoye, 2018).

Interactivity and Engagement

Another significant change brought about by digital platforms is the increased interactivity between critics and their audiences. On traditional platforms, film criticism was a one-way street, with critics offering their opinions to a passive audience. Digital platforms, however, enable a two-way interaction. Audiences can comment on reviews, engage in discussions, and even contribute their own reviews, creating a dynamic and interactive environment (Koresky, 2024). This interactivity fosters a more engaged and informed audience, as discussions can deepen understanding and appreciation of films (Nussbaum, 2024). The 2010s brought further changes with the rise of social media and video content. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram enabled immediate, real-time reactions to films. Hashtags and trending topics amplified these discussions, making them part of broader cultural conversations. Social media facilitated direct interaction between critics and audiences, creating a more interactive and participatory environment. Channels such as "Every Frame a Painting" and "Nerdwriter" popularized the video essay format, combining visual analysis with critique. YouTubers like Chris Stuckmann and Jeremy Jahns reached millions with their video reviews (Hornaday, 2023). Video platforms allowed for more dynamic and engaging content, using clips, graphics, and sound to enhance the critique (Danks and Adrian, 2014). Film podcasts like "Filmspotting" and "The Filmcast" provided space for extended discussions, often featuring multiple hosts and guest critics. These formats allowed for nuanced, long-form analysis (Hornaday, 2023). Podcasts could be consumed on-the-go, making them accessible to a wide audience and fostering a sense of community among listeners.

Changing Economic Models

The economic models underpinning film criticism have also evolved with the transition to digital platforms. Traditional film critics were typically salaried employees of newspapers or magazines, but digital critics often rely on different revenue streams such as advertising, sponsorships, Patreon support, and merchandise sales (MacDowell, 2023). This shift has allowed for greater independence and creativity but also presents challenges in terms of financial stability and the potential influence of commercial interests on critical integrity (Bordwell and Thompson, 2023). The landscape of film criticism and analysis has undergone a significant transformation with the advent of digital platforms, driven by changing economic models. These new economic paradigms have reshaped how film criticism is produced, distributed, and consumed, especially in Nigeria. The shift to digital platforms has been fueled by the need for more sustainable and accessible economic models, which in turn have opened up new avenues for both critics and audiences (Uche, 2024).

Print media entails significant production costs, including expenses for printing, distribution, and physical infrastructure (Nwafor, 2017). These costs often translated into high prices for consumers,

limiting access to film criticism to those who could afford it. Additionally, distribution challenges, particularly in rural areas, meant that critical content was often inaccessible to a large portion of the Nigerian population. Furthermore, Traditional media heavily relied on advertising revenue to sustain operations (Ekwuazi, 2017). This dependence on advertisers often influenced editorial decisions, potentially compromising the objectivity and integrity of film criticism (McDonald and Janet, 2020). Critics might have faced pressure to align their reviews with the interests of advertisers, limiting the scope and honesty of their analyses. The economic constraints of print media also restricted audience reach. Physical copies of newspapers and magazines were often limited to urban centers, leaving rural areas underserved. This geographical limitation meant that film criticism was not as widespread as it could be, curbing the potential for a more inclusive and diverse discourse (Barrot, 2018).

Digital platforms significantly reduce the production and distribution costs associated with traditional print media (Adejunmobi, 2020). Creating and maintaining a website or blog is relatively inexpensive compared to printing and distributing physical copies. This cost reduction allows critics to publish more content without the financial constraints that plagued print media (Adesokan, 2019). These platforms open up a variety of revenue streams beyond traditional advertising. Film critics can now monetize their content through:

- **Subscriptions and Memberships:** Platforms like Patreon allow critics to generate income directly from their audience through subscription fees and memberships. This model fosters a more direct and sustainable relationship between critics and their supporters.
- **Crowdfunding:** Platforms like Kickstarter and GoFundMe enable critics to fund specific projects or initiatives through one-time contributions from their audience.
- **Affiliate Marketing:** Critics can earn commissions by promoting products or services related to their content, such as streaming services, film merchandise, or cinema tickets.
- **Ad Revenue and Sponsorships:** Digital advertising, including targeted ads and sponsorships, remains a viable revenue stream. However, the nature of digital advertising allows for more nuanced and less intrusive integration compared to traditional print ads.

Again, digital platforms transcend geographical boundaries, allowing critics to reach a global audience. The internet provides unparalleled accessibility, enabling anyone with an internet connection to access film criticism and analysis. This expanded reach not only increases the audience base but also fosters a more diverse and inclusive discourse (Onyekwere, 2023).

The Evolving Nature of Critical Discourse

The nature of film criticism itself has evolved with the rise of online platforms. Traditional film criticism often adhered to a formal, structured approach, with reviews following a set format and tone (Bordwell and Thompson, 2023). Online criticism, however, is more varied in style and format. Video essays, podcasts, social media threads, and interactive blogs have introduced new ways of engaging with films and presenting critical analysis. This evolution has made film criticism more dynamic and engaging, attracting a younger audience and encouraging more active participation in the critical discourse (Arewa, 2023). The interactive nature of online platforms also allows for immediate feedback and discussion, fostering a more vibrant and communal critical environment.

The impact of online platforms on film criticism extends beyond critics and audiences to the film industry itself. Filmmakers and studios are increasingly aware of the power of online reviews and social media buzz in shaping public perception and box office performance (Haynes, 2023).

Positive online reviews can boost a film's visibility and credibility, while negative reviews can quickly spread and harm a film's reputation (Hornaday, 2023). This heightened influence of online criticism has led to a more symbiotic relationship between critics and filmmakers, with both parties recognizing the importance of engaging with online platforms. Additionally, the immediacy of online feedback allows filmmakers to gauge audience reactions in real-time, potentially influencing future projects and marketing strategies (MacDowell, 2023).

Key Online Platforms for Film Criticism and Analysis in Nigeria

Blogs and Personal Websites: Blogs and personal websites have become essential platforms for film criticism and analysis in Nigeria (Onyekwere, 2023). These platforms provide a space for independent voices to share their perspectives on Nigerian cinema, particularly Nollywood, and have become influential in shaping public opinion and industry trends. Aggregator sites like Rotten Tomatoes and Metacritic have also played a crucial role in the digital transformation of film criticism (Adejunmobi, 2020). These platforms compile reviews from a wide range of critics and assign a cumulative score, providing a quick and accessible overview of a film's reception. Okoye (2018) states that while some argue that this reduces complex critiques to mere numbers, others appreciate the convenience and breadth of perspectives it offers. User reviews on platforms like IMDb and Letterboxd have further expanded the landscape of film criticism (McDonald and Janet, 2020). These sites allow ordinary viewers to share their thoughts and rate films, contributing to a more collective and democratic form of criticism. This shift has led to a more participatory culture where professional critics and everyday viewers engage in dialogue and debate.

One of the earliest and most influential online platforms dedicated to Nigerian film criticism is Nollywood Reinvented. Founded in 2011, Nollywood Reinvented provides reviews, ratings, and analytical articles about Nollywood films. The platform's accessibility and user-friendly interface have made it a go-to resource for both casual viewers and film scholars.

In addition to Nollywood Reinvented, numerous blogs and websites emerged, offering varied perspectives on Nigerian cinema. These platforms are often run by passionate individuals who provide in-depth analysis and critique, filling a gap left by mainstream media. The personal nature of blogs also allows for more subjective and nuanced takes on films, reflecting the diverse tastes and preferences of Nigerian audiences (Arewa, 2023).

Nollywood Reinvented: A prominent blog dedicated to reviewing Nigerian films. It offers detailed reviews, ratings, and industry news, contributing significantly to the discourse on Nollywood films. This blog stands out as a pivotal online platform for film criticism and analysis in Nigeria. Since its inception, the blog has significantly contributed to the discourse surrounding Nigerian cinema, offering detailed reviews, ratings, and industry insights. The blog features a variety of content including:

- **Film Reviews:** In-depth critiques of Nollywood films, focusing on various aspects such as storytelling, acting, cinematography, and cultural relevance.
- **Ratings:** A structured rating system that evaluates films based on several criteria, providing a clear and concise assessment.
- **Industry News:** Updates and news related to Nollywood, including upcoming releases, industry trends, and significant events.

Nollywood Reinvented has played a crucial role in raising the standards of film criticism in Nigeria. The platform's detailed and well-reasoned reviews set a benchmark for quality and professionalism in the industry. Reviews on Nollywood Reinvented often delve into the intricacies

of film production, such as screenplay structure, character development, and directorial choices, providing readers with a thorough understanding of what makes a film successful or lacking (Uche, 2024). The blog's reviews are influential in shaping public perception and audience expectations. Positive reviews can generate buzz and increase viewership, while critical reviews can spark discussions about the areas needing improvement (Adejunmobi, 2020). The review of "The Wedding Party" on Nollywood Reinvented significantly contributed to the film's pre-release hype, drawing attention to its strengths and creating anticipation among potential viewers (Arewa, 2023).

Again, the blog often features independent and lesser-known films, providing them with much-needed visibility. This support helps these films reach a broader audience that they might not otherwise access through mainstream media channels. The blog's review of "Confusion Na Wa," an independent film, helped draw attention to its unique storytelling and production quality, contributing to its critical acclaim and success (Uche, 2024).

Nollywood Reinvented has built a loyal community of readers and film enthusiasts who actively engage with its content. The platform's comment sections and social media interactions facilitate discussions and debates, enhancing the collective appreciation of Nigerian cinema. The interactive nature of the platform encourages readers to share their views, agree or disagree with reviews, and participate in discussions about the broader industry trends. The detailed critiques and analyses on the blog serve as an educational resource for filmmakers, film students, and enthusiasts. The blog's insights into various aspects of film production and criticism offer valuable learning opportunities. For instance, aspiring filmmakers can learn from the blog's breakdown of successful films, understanding what elements contribute to effective storytelling, strong performances, and technical excellence.

Sodas 'N' Popcorn: This blog provides film reviews, news, and features on both Nigerian and international cinema. It is known for its comprehensive reviews and engaging writing style. Sodas and Popcorn is an influential Nigerian film blog that has carved a niche for itself in the landscape of online film criticism and commentary. The platform serves as a hub for film enthusiasts, providing reviews, analysis, and news about both local and international cinema. Sodas and Popcorn was founded with the aim of creating a space where Nigerian films could be critically analyzed and celebrated alongside international films. The blog has evolved over time, growing from a small, passion-driven project into a widely recognized platform. It has attracted a diverse readership, including both casual moviegoers and serious cinephiles, who rely on the blog for insightful and reliable film reviews. At the core of Sodas and Popcorn's content are its film reviews. These reviews cover a wide range of genres and styles, from blockbuster hits to independent films and Nollywood productions. The reviews are known for their thoroughness and balance, providing readers with a well-rounded perspective on each film's strengths and weaknesses. The blog's reviewers often explore various aspects of filmmaking, including direction, acting, screenplay, cinematography, and overall thematic depth.

In addition to film reviews, Sodas and Popcorn offers the latest news and updates from the film industry. This includes announcements about upcoming releases, casting news, industry trends, and box office reports. By keeping readers informed about the latest developments in the film world, the blog ensures that its audience is always up-to-date with what's happening in both Nollywood and Hollywood.

The blog also publishes in-depth features and editorials that delve into broader topics related to cinema. These articles might explore trends in filmmaking, cultural impacts of certain movies, or

profiles of influential filmmakers and actors. The editorial content on Sodas and Popcorn often provides a deeper understanding of the film industry and its various intricacies. Interviews with filmmakers, actors, and other industry professionals are another highlight of the blog. These interviews offer readers a behind-the-scenes look at the creative processes and personal stories of those involved in making movies. They add a personal touch to the blog and allow readers to connect more deeply with the subjects of the films they watch.

One of the most significant contributions of Sodas and Popcorn is its promotion of Nigerian cinema. The blog's reviews and features on Nollywood films help to elevate the industry's profile, both within Nigeria and internationally. By providing thoughtful and comprehensive critiques of Nigerian films, Sodas and Popcorn contributes to the ongoing conversation about the quality and impact of Nollywood. Sodas and Popcorn effectively bridges the gap between local and international cinema. By covering a diverse array of films from around the world, the blog fosters a sense of global connectivity among its readers (Onyekwere, 2023). This inclusivity helps to broaden the horizons of Nigerian film enthusiasts, encouraging them to appreciate and explore films beyond their immediate cultural context. As a trusted source of film criticism, Sodas and Popcorn has a considerable influence on public opinion. Readers often turn to the blog for recommendations and insights before deciding which films to watch. The blog's reviews help shape the viewing choices of its audience, thereby playing a role in the success of the films it covers (Uche, 2024).

Again, the analytical nature of Sodas and Popcorn's content encourages readers to engage in critical thinking about the films they watch. By presenting well-reasoned arguments and highlighting various aspects of filmmaking, the blog fosters a deeper appreciation for the art of cinema. This, in turn, helps to cultivate a more discerning and knowledgeable audience. Blogs and personal websites have become essential sources of in-depth film analysis and criticism (Nussbaum, 2024). They offer a platform for independent critics to share their perspectives, often providing more nuanced and detailed reviews compared to mainstream media. These platforms help in building a community of readers and film enthusiasts, fostering a more engaged and informed audience (McDowell, 2023).

2. YouTube and Video Essays

The rise of YouTube has introduced a new dimension to film criticism in Nigeria (Arewa, 2023). Video essays and reviews offer a more dynamic and engaging way to analyze films. Channels like "Nollywood Critics" and "Nolly Fans" produce content that breaks down film techniques, narrative structures, and thematic elements, often with visual aids and clips from the films being discussed (Onyekwere, 2023).

Video content is particularly effective in a country like Nigeria, where literacy rates vary, and visual media can bridge gaps in understanding (Adesokan, 2019). It also allows critics to reach a younger, tech-savvy audience that consumes content primarily through their smartphones and computers. For instance, the Cinema Shed, a YouTube channel that offers film reviews, trailers, and discussions on both Nigerian and international films is known for its engaging video content and visual analysis (Uche, 2024). Another YouTube channel, Nolly Rated, focuses on reviewing Nollywood films, providing insights and critiques that are accessible to a wide audience (Onyekwere, 2023). The channel also features interviews with industry professionals. YouTube channels have revolutionized film criticism by incorporating multimedia elements like video clips, trailers, and on-screen analysis (Adejunmobi, 2020). This makes the reviews more engaging and

visually appealing. These channels reach a broader audience, including younger viewers who prefer video content over traditional text-based reviews (Ekwuazi, 2017).

3. Social Media: Social media has revolutionized film criticism in Nigeria by enabling real-time engagement and fostering community discussions (Adesokan, 2019). Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have become crucial spaces for film discourse. Film critics and audiences alike use these platforms to share their views, engage in debates, and amplify their voices (Uche, 2024).

Twitter, in particular, has become a hub for film criticism (Onyekwere, 2023). Hashtags like #Nollywood and #NigerianCinema allow users to follow and participate in conversations about the latest releases and industry trends. Influential critics and bloggers often use Twitter to share quick reviews and insights, which can then spark broader discussions among their followers. Film critics and bloggers use Instagram to share film reviews, snippets, and promotional content through posts, stories, and IGTV (Haynes, 2023). Visual content and short reviews are popular on this platform. Social media platforms facilitate real-time interaction between film critics and their audience (Adesokan, 2019). They enable discussions, debates, and the exchange of ideas, fostering a dynamic and interactive film criticism culture. The use of hashtags and trending topics helps in amplifying the reach of film reviews and bringing more attention to Nigerian cinema (Adejunmobi, 2020).

4. Online Magazines and News Websites: While traditional print media has declined, many established film magazines and journals have successfully transitioned to digital formats (Koresky, 2024). Publications like *Sight & Sound*, *Film Comment*, and *Cahiers du Cinéma* have embraced online platforms, offering digital subscriptions, archives, and multimedia content (MacDowell, 2023). This transition has allowed these outlets to reach a global audience and adapt to the changing media landscape.

Moreover, new digital magazines and online journals have emerged, focusing on diverse and underrepresented voices in film criticism (Adesokan, 2019). Sites like *Shadow and Act*, *Women and Hollywood*, and *The Black List* provide platforms for critics who might have been marginalized in traditional media, contributing to a richer and more inclusive critical discourse (Bordwell and Thompson, 2023). For instance, *Pulse Nigeria* is an online news platform that covers a wide range of topics, including film reviews and industry news. It offers professional reviews and features on both local and international films. Again, *BellaNaija*, another online news platform known for its lifestyle and entertainment coverage, provides reviews, interviews, and articles on Nollywood films and personalities (Adejunmobi, 2020). Online magazines and news websites bring a level of professionalism and editorial quality to film criticism (Uche, 2024). They often employ experienced writers and critics, providing well-researched and polished content. These platforms have a wide reach and influence, often being cited by other media and referenced by industry professionals (Arewa, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The advent of digital media has fundamentally transformed the landscape of communication, entertainment, and film criticism (McDonald and Wasko, 2020). This transformation necessitates robust theoretical frameworks to analyze and understand the implications of digital media and film criticism. These frameworks provide tools to dissect the complex interplay between content, technology, audiences, and societal impact. This paper explores the technological determinism

theory as a key theoretical framework that is instrumental in analyzing digital media and film criticism.

Technological Determinism Theory

In the rapidly evolving landscape of film criticism and analysis, the emergence of online media platforms has dramatically reshaped how films are discussed, evaluated, and disseminated (Bordwell and Thompson, 2023). Theoretical frameworks such as technological determinism offer valuable insights into these transformations by examining the relationship between technology and society. Technological determinism is a theory that posits technology as the primary driver of societal change (McLuhan, 1964). It suggests that technological advancements shape social structures, cultural norms, and individual behaviors. This perspective, often associated with theorists like Marshall McLuhan and Raymond Williams, emphasizes the notion that technology possesses an inherent power to determine the direction of societal development.

There are two main strands of technological determinism: **hard determinism** and **soft determinism**. Hard determinism asserts that technology develops independently of social influences and inevitably shapes society in specific ways. In contrast, soft determinism acknowledges a reciprocal relationship between technology and society, recognizing that technological advancements are influenced by social contexts and, in turn, shape societal outcomes (Jenkins, 2006).

Technological Determinism and Online Media Platforms

Applying technological determinism to the study of film criticism and analysis in the digital era involves examining how online media platforms influence and shape critical discourse. This analysis can be approached through several key dimensions:

1. Transformation of Criticism Formats:

- **Digital Review Platforms:** Websites such as Rotten Tomatoes and Metacritic aggregate reviews from various critics and audiences, providing a quantified assessment of films. These platforms influence how films are perceived and consumed by shaping public opinion and directing attention.
- **Social Media and Micro-Criticism:** Platforms like Twitter and Instagram allow for brief, immediate reactions to films. This format promotes rapid, often fragmented critiques, which contrast with the more in-depth analyses traditionally found in print media.

2. Democratization of Criticism:

- **Citizen Critics:** Online platforms enable individuals without formal credentials to participate in film criticism. This democratization challenges traditional authority structures and introduces diverse perspectives that might not be represented in conventional media.
- **Feedback Loops:** Social media facilitates real-time interactions between critics and audiences, creating feedback loops that influence subsequent critiques and film discourse.

3. Algorithmic Influence:

- **Recommendation Systems:** Streaming services like Netflix and Amazon Prime use algorithms to recommend films based on user preferences and viewing history. These recommendations can shape viewing habits and, consequently, the focus of film criticism.

- **Visibility and Curation:** Algorithms also determine the visibility of reviews and critiques, influencing which voices are amplified and which remain marginalized.
- 4. **Globalization of Film Criticism:**
 - **Cross-Cultural Exchanges:** Online platforms facilitate the global exchange of film criticism, allowing audiences and critics from different cultural contexts to engage with and influence each other's perspectives.
 - **Local vs. Global Critiques:** The internet enables localized critiques to gain global visibility, impacting how films from various regions are evaluated and understood.

Critique of Technological Determinism in Film Criticism

While technological determinism offers valuable insights, it is important to consider its limitations. Critics of the theory argue that it often overlooks the complex interplay between technology and social factors. For instance, the rise of online media platforms is not solely driven by technological advancements but is also influenced by economic, cultural, and political factors. Additionally, the emphasis on technology as a determining force can obscure the role of human agency in shaping how technology is used and interpreted. Film critics and audiences actively engage with online platforms in ways that reflect their values, interests, and social contexts, highlighting the reciprocal relationship between technology and society.

Technological determinism provides a useful framework for understanding the impact of online media platforms on film criticism and analysis in the digital era. By examining how these platforms shape critical discourse, democratize participation, and influence viewing habits, we gain insight into the evolving nature of film criticism. However, it is essential to approach this analysis with a recognition of the complex interplay between technology and society, acknowledging that technological advancements are both shaped by and shape human behaviors and cultural norms. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, ongoing examination of these dynamics will be crucial for understanding the future of film criticism and analysis.

Challenges of Film Criticism and Analysis in the digital era

The digital era has transformed film criticism and analyses, reshaping the way audiences engage with and evaluate films. With the rise of online platforms, the landscape of film criticism has become increasingly democratized, allowing diverse voices and perspectives to emerge (Adejunmobi, 2020). However, this transformation has not come without its challenges. The proliferation of digital media and the influence of online platforms present unique obstacles to maintaining the quality and integrity of film criticism.

One of the most significant changes brought about by the digital era is the democratization of film criticism. Platforms like social media, blogs, and video-sharing sites such as YouTube have enabled anyone with an internet connection to participate in film analysis. This shift has led to a more inclusive and diverse array of voices in the film criticism sphere. While this democratization has its advantages, it also introduces several challenges in the sense that, distinguishing between well-informed analysis and superficial opinions can be challenging. The lack of formal training or expertise among some online critics can lead to uneven quality in film reviews. Unlike traditional critics, who often have academic backgrounds or professional experience in film studies, online critics may not always adhere to rigorous analytical standards (Onyekwere, 2023).

Again, the ease of publishing content online can contribute to the spread of misinformation. Inaccurate or biased reviews may be shared widely, potentially influencing public opinion in misleading ways (Nussbaum, 2024). The absence of editorial oversight on many online platforms

can exacerbate this issue, allowing unverified claims and personal biases to permeate film criticism. Algorithms often prioritize content that garners high engagement, such as likes, shares, and comments (MacDowell, 2023). This can result in popular or sensationalist reviews being promoted over more nuanced or scholarly analyses. As a consequence, the visibility of film criticism may be skewed, with less attention given to in-depth or critical perspectives that do not conform to trending topics. Furthermore, algorithms can also create echo chambers by filtering content to match users' existing preferences and beliefs. This phenomenon can limit exposure to diverse viewpoints and contribute to polarized opinions on films. Users may only encounter reviews that reinforce their preconceptions, hindering a comprehensive understanding of the film and its critical reception (Bordwell and Thompson, 2023).

Similarly, Online critics often engage with their audience through comments, social media interactions, and live streams (Haynes, 2023). While this engagement can foster a sense of community and responsiveness, it may also pressure critics to cater to audience preferences rather than providing objective analysis. Film critics might adjust their content to align with popular opinions or avoid controversy, potentially compromising the integrity of their critiques. However, the rise of influencers and content creators has added a new dimension to film criticism (Hornaday, 2023). Influencers with large followings can shape public opinion and drive discourse around films. While this can democratize and diversify film criticism, it also risks prioritizing popularity over substance. Influencers may focus on creating engaging or entertaining content at the expense of in-depth analysis, impacting the quality of film critique (Arewa, 2023).

Online platforms facilitate the use of multimedia formats, such as video essays, podcasts, and interactive content (Haynes, 2023). While these formats can enhance the richness of film analysis, they also require critics to adapt to new skills and technologies. The demand for multimedia content can place additional pressures on critics, who may need to balance quality with production demands. Furthermore, user-generated content has become a prominent feature of online film criticism. While this can provide diverse perspectives, it also raises questions about credibility and accountability (Okoye, 2018). The informal nature of user-generated content may lack the rigor of traditional film criticism, and distinguishing between credible reviews and casual opinions can be challenging for audiences.

Again, the interplay between film criticism and marketing has evolved with the rise of online platforms. Early reviews and social media buzz can significantly influence a film's success or failure. Positive reviews from influential online critics can boost a film's visibility, while negative reviews can deter potential viewers. This dynamic can create pressures for critics to publish early opinions, sometimes sacrificing thorough analysis for immediacy. It has been observed that platforms that aggregate user reviews, such as Rotten Tomatoes or Metacritic, provide a collective measure of a film's reception. While this crowdsourced approach offers a broad perspective, it can also lead to oversimplification and a lack of nuanced critique (Koresky, 2024). Aggregate scores may not capture the complexity of individual reviews, affecting how films are perceived by the public.

The digital era has profoundly transformed film criticism and analysis, presenting both opportunities and challenges. Online platforms have democratized film criticism, allowing diverse voices to emerge and engage with audiences (Hornaday, 2023). However, this transformation also introduces challenges related to quality control, misinformation, algorithmic bias, and the dynamics of critic-audience interactions. As film criticism continues to evolve in the digital age, addressing these challenges will be crucial for maintaining the integrity and depth of film analysis.

Navigating the complexities of the digital landscape requires a balance between embracing new technologies and upholding the standards of thoughtful and rigorous critique (Onyekwere, 2023).

Suggestions of the study

Addressing the challenges of film criticism and analysis in the digital era requires a multi-faceted approach that balances technological opportunities with the need for quality, credibility, and diverse perspectives. The paper therefore proffers the following suggestions;

1. Online film critics are encouraged to adhere to established standards of film analysis and criticism. This could involve promoting professional development opportunities, such as workshops and courses in film studies and criticism.
2. Online platforms can introduce features that allow users to flag inaccurate or misleading content, and provide tools for critics to support their claims with evidence. This will aid in implementing mechanisms for verifying information and fact-checking reviews.
3. Film critics are encouraged to maintain objectivity and avoid being swayed by audience feedback. Providing guidelines on maintaining analytical rigor while engaging with audiences can help balance responsiveness with critical independence.
4. Online platforms for film criticism and analysis can develop features that facilitate meaningful interactions between critics and audiences. This could include structured Q&A sessions, moderated discussions, and feedback mechanisms that allow for constructive dialogue.
5. Relevant film stakeholders are encouraged to provide training and resources for critics to develop skills in multimedia content creation, such as video editing and podcast production. This can help ensure that new formats are used effectively and enhance the quality of film analysis.
6. Film critics are advised to maintain independence from marketing and public relations pressures. Establishing codes of ethics for critics and platforms can help preserve the integrity of reviews and analyses.
7. The film criticism landscape should create spaces for critical discussion and debate about films, where users can engage with various viewpoints and analytical approaches. Forums, discussion threads, and collaborative review platforms can encourage a more nuanced discourse.

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