

## **Online Streaming: A Paradigm Shift for Nollywood Movie Distribution**

**Joe Odedina**

Department of Performing Arts and Film Production,  
Faculty of Humanities, Management and Social Sciences,  
Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria  
Email: [joe.odedina@kwasu.edu.ng](mailto:joe.odedina@kwasu.edu.ng)  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1105-9975>

### **Abstract**

The Nigerian movie distribution and exhibition business has undergone major transformation in the last few years due to technological innovation. The study is about Nollywood paradigm shift from hard copy movie distribution to online streaming services. The aim is to ascertain why producers are moving to soft screening through online pay-to-view platforms. The objectives were to find out if this new trend is financially beneficial to the producers and whether it will likely continue in the future. The study adopted qualitative methods to interrogate existing data on some of the most popular Nollywood films released online by Netflix. This is based on a snap-shot of Netflix's popularity chart in the month of October, 2020 and news of cinema theatre films release around the same period. The findings are that the online distribution deals must have been profitable for the producers, judging by repeated use by some of them and others enlisting in the business. The expanding scope of Nollywood producers using these online streaming platforms for distributions of their work suggests the likelihood of a continuing process. The study concludes that this is a mutually beneficial relationship between local producers and online business global entities. It, therefore, recommends that Nollywood producers avoid signing exclusive deals with online distributors only. This will allow home-grown cinema theatres to be financially rewarding to prevent the nation's cinema theatre chains from collapsing due to redundancy.

**Keywords:** Film entertainment business, Distribution, Exhibition, Online streaming, Nollywood.

## **Introduction**

Film entertainment business has become a global phenomenon and its impact cuts across cultural, religious and socio-economic boundaries. From choosing how to dress, where to go for holidays, media advertising, watching for pleasure and informational documentaries, the influence of cinema in human lives is pervasive and profound. Ray (2014, p.117) states that: "one of the most significant phenomena of our time has been the development of the cinema from a turn-of-the-century mechanical toy into the century's most potent and versatile art form." Underneath all these artistic and technical processes of filmmaking lies the distribution business without which there would be no funding for more. At times, it is often forgotten that this ubiquitous art form is also a business. This business thrives when it reaches as many legitimate audiences as possible through distribution.

Cinema debuted in Nigeria at the beginning of the twentieth century with film exhibition, unlike in the West where its arrival was through a process of trials and errors that eventually culminated in the initial film production (Ekwuazi, 1991). For there to be an exhibition in the West, there was a production of the material to be exhibited. The initial screening done in Nigeria over a century ago was the production made by the West where the tools of film production domiciled at the period. The trend continued for decades whereby movies made in the West were imported to Nigeria for consumption. By 1960 when Nigeria got its political independence from Britain, this trend not only continued but expanded its scope of film importation to include those of the Eastern nations such as India and China, thereby leading to an explosion of international dumping of various genres of movies on the Nigerian entertainment landscape. From Chinese Kung Fu choreographed martial art films to India's melodramatic love stories and America's *Dirty Harry* (1971) shoot them dead gun duels; Nigeria's cinema entertainment was a one-way street of copious consumption of foreign movies without any locally produced ones.

Eventually, the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree (NEPD) of 1972, also known as the Indigenisation Decree was promulgated and it ceded a majority of cinema theatre ownership to Nigerian citizens. The decree's goal was to correct the majority ownership of cinema houses by

foreigners with a direct nexus to the types of films imported, most of which have no cultural relevance to the Nigerian people. The idea was that if more Nigerians were involved in film exhibition hall ownership, they would influence the importation of more culturally relevant films for public consumption. Unfortunately, what happened instead was that the foreign business owners only allowed their Nigerian proxies as the majority shareholders, while the real ownership and decision-making rested with the foreigners. Therefore, while the letter of the law was satisfied to an extent, the spirit of that law was corrupted and bastardized. Shehu (1992, p.25) states that: although the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Act 1972 (Indigenisation Decree) was aimed in parts at correcting these neo-colonial tendencies in our filmmaking and distribution, any serious investigation will reveal that many of our film exhibition centres are owned by Nigerian fronts on behalf of foreigners.

Even with the above scenario, one would have expected that when local commercial cinema production took off in the middle of 1970s, the distribution and exhibition experience of over fifty years would ensure smooth channels to reach the audience. This was not the case because most exhibition halls were controlled by foreign business owners who were not keen on competition from local producers. It is on the basis of this that in the middle of 1970s when indigenous cinema production started to spring up through private equities, there was no government support. The government wrongly believed in the perfected paperwork submitted for NEPD. The Lebanese and Indian businessmen that actually owned many commercial cinema theatres in Lagos such as Sheila Cinema on Broad Street and King's Cinema Theatre at Igboshere Road Bus Stop in Lagos Island worked against NEPD by asking for a majority share of ticket sales to project these indigenous films in their cinema theatres. In a bid to overcome foreign control that resulted in expensive distribution costs, Nigerian film producers have been constantly innovative in their distributional methods with a view to maximizing profits. One of their creative ingenuities to resolve this problem included taking their film work on a road show distribution to reach the audience. In this effort, the producers of the early years would take their finished films from town to town for them to control the box office receipts and protect their work from piracy.

It can be argued that such ideas stemmed from their days as members of the Yoruba travelling theatre troupes who plied their theatrical stage plays in similar ways up until just before the advent of

commercial film production in Nigeria. At a point, both stage plays and cinema road trip distribution happened concurrently with various travelling theatre groups. This study is about the distribution and exhibition business of Nollywood films, especially within the recent trend of paradigm shift towards online distribution screening. It seeks to ascertain why producers are moving from direct-to-DVD/home video distribution to soft screening through online pay-to-view platforms. It hopes to find out whether these online distribution platforms are more financially rewarding for the producers than the old method of direct-to-home video distribution and if this trend will likely continue. The study employed the qualitative modalities of direct observation, historicocritical and analytical methods to review existing data on some of the recent activities and growth of online pay-to-view distribution platforms in Nigeria.

In doing this, it examined film distribution business over the last five years and the increasing participation of Nollywood producers, with a view to discovering trends of Nollywood film releases in the present time and predicts the likelihood of the future as regards movie distribution business in Nigeria. The study utilises some data of online survey of popular Netflix programmes captured within the month of October 2020. It systematically evaluates the number of Nollywood production movies that are among the ten most Netflix popular movies watched by its Nigeria's subscribed audience during that period. This popularity ranking is automatically calculated by Netflix's algorithm computers that measure the number of subscribers that watch the films on their network each month. At the beginning of every month, a new most popular ranking is generated by Netflix system, thereby giving a snapshot of a monthly popularity.

### **Nollywood Bucking the Trend**

Towards the end of the last millennium when this researcher was completing his master's studies in film at New York Institute of Technology, the rotational order of cinema release was first through the thousands of cinema chain theatres of America. During special times such as Christmas holidays or summer periods, this national distribution may be combined with simultaneous international release and after about six months or so depending on the popularity of the movie involved, it is moved to home video/DVD distribution arm of the company that released the film, controlled by studios such as Warner, Columbia and

Disney. The home video/DVD at the time cuts across two parts. The first was the sale of newly released videos by the video distribution arm of the studio production company that released the movie such as Time Warner, MGM, Columbia Pictures and Disney Entertainment. Each new video/DVD may cost between \$20 and \$40 US Dollars, while the older videos were sold at a discount, especially with a new membership subscription and a commitment to purchase more videos at regular cost in the future.

The second part of the home video business was the rental of video/DVD and in this category Blockbuster Video was a colossus giant that controlled the major share of these home video rentals and distribution in America. While there were individual neighbourhood video rental stores all over the cities and towns of America, these distribution channels paled in comparison to Blockbuster Video. Blockbuster Video was a fully registered member of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) with billions of dollars in revenue earnings and thousands of video store outlets all over America. While not affiliated with any of Hollywood studios, it partnered with and distributed all the major studios' films through VHS videos and DVDs after their cinema theatre runs. Blockbuster Video did this through outright sales and rentals of video tapes and DVDs. Their business model was so successful that at a time, the company was as big as some of the Hollywood studios they served. Fryer (2018, p.1) affirms that: "In 2004, the world was home to about 9,000 Blockbuster outlets. By 2013, the last remaining corporate-owned stores had closed, but privately owned locations were able to license the Blockbuster brand. This was the trend of Hollywood commercial cinema release process. Although Blockbuster Video has closed shops, the trend of first cinema hall release before any other venue prevails currently for the most part.

Nigerian filmmakers and producers on the other hand have the tendency to fashion out what works for them to achieve their production and distribution business goals. Owing to financial and infrastructural deficits in Nollywood production chains, each producer is often left with bridging these gaps in their own production and exhibition process. In a recent interview on Channels Television, Kunle Afolayan stated that "I am glad to unload my latest film on Netflix". What Afolayan is saying is that despite the Covid-19 that prevents people from going to the cinema theatres for fear of catching the virus, he is happy that Netflix provides an avenue for him to entertain his audience and collect his financial

remuneration. Kunle Afolayan is a Nigerian filmmaker who needs no introduction to anybody who is familiar with Nollywood and his confession to the host of the show (Ebuka Obi-Uchendu) on 15th November, 2020 about being happy to use Netflix as his distribution channel when *Citation* (2020) came out reveals the new trend in Nollywood for a couple of reasons.

Firstly, it was Afolayan who reinvented the cinema theatrical release order of Nollywood movies with his production of *The Figurine* (2009) after a glut of lacklustre direct-to-home video release. Home video release had been the trend of commercial film distribution and exhibition in Nigeria from the time of *Living in Bondage* (1992). Some scholars have argued that Nollywood came into being in 1992 on account of the popularity of *Living in Bondage* (1992). Dovey (2018, p. 94) claims that: within African screen media studies, much recent attention has been devoted to how Nollywood the southern Nigerian video-film industry, which originated in 1992 partly out of television practices has helped to engender a turn away from what certain scholars call “developmentality” toward recognizing the value and popularity of home-grown entertainment.

The above misconception of Nollywood originating in 1992 as opined above needs to be cleared to prevent others from being misguided. Prior to its release in 1992, the usual trend of Nigerian movie production and exhibition were in celluloid and through cinema hall release respectively. As stated earlier, some of these cinemas may be a make shift type that is hurriedly fashioned out on a road trip distribution, but the basic 16mm and 35mm celluloid projectors were the routine. Films like *Amadi* (1975), *Ajani Ogun* (1976), *Bisi Daughter of the River* (1977) and *Ija Ominira* (1979) were all made in celluloid with successful cinema theatrical releases. These were just a few of the production that came out through this means at that time. While the focus of this study is not about the beginning of Nollywood, it is worthy to point out that the films mentioned here were released over a decade before 1992 to commercial successes.

At that early period, Nigerian film producers never released their films on video for fear of piracy, even though video films of foreign production were a popular entertainment event in Nigeria at that time. This narrative changed when foreign exchange for celluloid dried up in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which afforded *Living in Bondage* (1992) a fertile soil to thrive because it was produced and distributed on video. Although the trend continued, Simon (2022, p.507) states that: “The

marketers became a cabal as no one else was allowed to distribute video films aside from them. Filmmakers also complained of being ripped off by marketers because there was no transparent accounting system or a reliable sales monitoring mechanism". The producer's fears were proven correct when Moses Adejumo's *Orun Mooru* (1982) which became a big commercial success at the initial release was illegally copied from celluloid to VHS video and distributed by pirates, an incident that turned financially catastrophic for the producer from which he became the poster child of Nigerian piracy effect and never recovered financially until his death. The lesson of financial risk to investment if a film is pirated as happened to Adejumo gave a hiatus to celluloid production while the nation's economic meltdown of the late 1980s was the final lacuna that resulted in the demise of celluloid film production in Nigeria.

As can be observed from above, film production was a very active industry in Nigeria before 1992. However, the producers were very concerned for their investment protection. Similar issues affect other film industries around the world as confirmed by Putra, Santosa, Hapsari, Hidayanto, and Kurnia (2022, p.999) who state that: "By the start of the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, piracy in Indonesia was still so rampant that the International Intellectual Property Alliance threatened to pressure the United States government to impose economic sanctions against the Indonesian government". What this translates to, is how each film industry develop an organic solution to their own industry problem, because every one of them has one problem or another plaguing them. In the Nollywood industry case, Adejumobi (2014, p.74) opines that "Nigerian filmmaking is also a moving target, changing frequently every few years and indeed every few months". The researcher's point is the fluid dynamics of trends within the Nollywood industry and if one waits too long to put these changes into focus, the moment might be missed.

The economic crunch that pervaded Nigeria in late 1980s and early 1990s did not spare the film industry, which made Ekwuazi (1991, p.62) laments at the time that, "creative control is subordinate to economic control: every so often, the creatively daring filmmaker is checkmated, matched and defeated right from the opening move". The bottom line of Ekwuazi's observation is exorbitant cost of production in foreign exchange and unavailability of it caused the demise of celluloid film production at that period, but also provides an avenue for video distribution. This is why Nollywood evolved to video production and distribution. It is also why Alade Aromire made *Ekun* (1986) through VHS

video production which was released at the National Theatre in Lagos like the regular celluloid films before its time. That was the beginning of the second phase of Nigerian film production which emerged through the cheaper production of video because Alade could not afford celluloid production. *Ekun* initially received minimal box office success due to the issue of pixel that distorts video when projected beyond the recording equipment capacity. At that time, there was little understanding of video technical drawback, as Nigerian filmmakers were mostly concerned about lower cost of production.

The economic bottleneck for film production through the video format was eventually cleared by the migration of *Living in Bondage* (1992) to VHS video and released through direct to home view, hence, dubbed as Home Video. That migration cleared the pixel problem that arose out of Aromire's *Ekun* (1986) which was projected to a large screen audience at the National Theatre. Both the production and exhibition technologies were synchronised thereby resulting in pixel harmony with no distorted movie. There were successful celluloid Nigerian produced movies before and after *Living in Bondage* (1992) and migrating from one distribution such as celluloid, video, digital or online, to another is an instinctively financial survival mode by the producers and should not be constituted as a beginning or end of the whole industry as represented by Nollywood. While VHS video production has been on-going before *Living in Bondage*, its commercial success was a game-changer in format migration. Ukadike (1994, p.115) affirms this fact when he states that: "By the mid-1970s, however, the significance of celluloid had waned, and in the 1980s film was largely displaced by the video format". This study disagrees with "the mid-1970s" avers by Ukadike as the waning period of celluloid, because this was in fact, the active period of celluloid production in Nigeria as dates of the earlier mentioned films indicate.

The popularity of *Living in Bondage* (1992) and its insignificant low production cost when compared to celluloid film production opened a floodgate of local filmmakers that jumped on the bandwagon of home video production. For over two decades after this, its successful formula was the norm in Nigerian movie production just like celluloid before it even as the distribution means evolved to DVD format. Describing the technical and artistic rot in the earlier home video productions and Afolayan as a trailblazer and trend setter who is out to distinguish his work, Rice (2012, p.1) states that: "And yet most of the movies themselves are awful, marred by slapdash production, melodramatic acting and



ludicrous plots. Afolayan, who is 37, is one of a group of upstart directors trying to transcend those rote formulas and low expectations". It was Afolayan's *Figurine* (2009) that bucked this direct release to home video trend by having a theatre cinema release first and after several months of theatrical patronage, he did the DVD direct to home release too. Many top Nigerian film producers have since followed in this footsteps, leaving those who could not afford the technological quality production requisite of this large screening behind with purely home video distribution.

Secondly, the year 2020 would not be forgotten in a hurry by anybody who was alive to have witnessed the event of Covid-19 virus pandemic. Nobody alive at the time had ever witnessed anything so devastating to human health on such a global scale, to the extent that cities, states and countries were locked-down for months in a row, thereby resulting in economic chaos all over the world. The corona virus pandemic officially came to the world's limelight stage on 11th of March, 2020 when the World Health Organization (WHO) announced to the world through its Director-General, Adhanom (2020, p.1) who states that: in the past two weeks, the number of cases of COVID-19 outside China has increased 13-fold, and the number of affected countries has tripled. There are now more than 118,000 cases in 114 countries and 4,291 people have lost their lives. Thousands more are fighting for their lives in hospitals. Soon after the above announcement by the World Health Organization (WHO) Director General, medical lexicons such as face mask, social distance, viral infection, asymptomatic, self-isolation, super-spreader, quarantine and hand sanitizer became a daily conversational terms.

Although the world have seen television footages of deserted streets of Wuhan city, China, where the covid-19 virus was said to have broken out before this announcement, most non-Chinese citizens thought it would be a Chinese problem that would be resolved by them. With WHO announcing the rapid spread to over a hundred countries within a short period of time, it was elevated from an epidemic to pandemic promptly. The world leaders began to instantly shut their borders and invariably locked down their cities to prevent further spread. Unfortunately, the genie was already out of the bottle. The significance of that lockdown was to avoid mass gathering and prevent the spread of covid-19 virus, the exact opposite of what is required for a thriving film exhibition economy. Therefore, when Afolayan avers his happiness to unload *Citation* (2020) on Netflix, it can be easily predicted that other Nigerian filmmakers were watching and it would not be long before they

followed suit. This is precisely what happened, as other producers for films like *Oloture* (2020), *Eve* (2018) and *Journey of an African Colony* (2018) among others, released their work directly through Netflix streaming platform too without going to the nation's cinema theatres that were on lockdown. The above two scenarios of cinema theatres lockdown worldwide due to fears of them becoming an avenue to spread the coronavirus infection and the history of Afolayan as a trail blazer in bucking conventional trend like he did with his *Figurine* (2009) release over ten years earlier with commercial success, combined together to form an impetus for other producers to follow his Netflix direct release of *Citation* (2020).

Subsequently, directors like Funke Akindele have followed with popular *Omo Ghetto* (2020) that was initially released through the nation's theatre, while *King of Boys: The Return of the King* (2021) is an all Netflix affair. Exhibition of Nollywood films through an online pay-to-view and monthly subscription to stream is not new in Nigeria. In fact, before Netflix found it convenient to push its market share of Nigerian audience on its online platform, a Nigerian American has been at it for over a decade. Fielding-Smith (2014, p.2) states that: "the person who has done most to explore the revenue-generating potential of online distribution of Nigerian cinema is Jason Njoku. He spends \$3m-\$4m a year licensing films to his iROKOTv online video streaming site." Njoku's first mover advantage in Nollywood movie distribution is also corroborated by Moudio (2013, p.24) who claims that: "as an entrepreneur, 32-year-old chemistry graduate Jason Njoku achieved success in a most unlikely way: he is Africa's largest distributor of Nigerian movies, and has raked in over \$8 million since 2010, when he founded the company Iroko Partners". The major difference that attract Netflix and other new players like Amazon Prime is that broadband network service is becoming cheaper and more readily available in Nigeria, as against in the early twenty-first century when iROKOTv debuted. At that time, most of iROKOTv subscribers were the diaspora natives due to poor internet speed at home. Lee, Nagpal, Ruane, and Lim (2018, p.3) claim that, "in today's world, we see constant technological changes within the US media industry. As technology grows and consumer preferences change, it is equally important for media companies (both cable and streaming services) to differentiate themselves". Internet availability is crucial for Netflix's foothold in Nigeria.

Comparing iROKOTv and Sceneone online pay-to-view to Netflix, Oludimu (2019, p.2) states that: “however, they all mostly have two things over Netflix; local content and competitive pricing. The African VOD market in general has a high demand for local content and Nollywood, Nigeria’s film industry churns out enough content to meet the market’s demand”. Local content is an advantage that Netflix has also embraced by now at higher cost. With the above higher subscription cost to the audience, one would have expected Netflix audience base to taper off soon after its Nigerian debut. To the contrary, however, Varrella (2021, p.1) submits that “on the whole African continent, Netflix was estimated to reach some 2.6 million subscribers by the end of 2021, out of a population of about 1.2 billion people. By its turn, the pay-TV service from MultiChoice's Showmax counted 861 thousand users in Africa”. The implication is that other factors such as quality production and large genre availability may have trumped over cost consideration.

Let’s not forget that Netflix only recently arrived in Nigeria as clarified by Ifayase (2020, p.1) who states that “Netflix’s initial foray into the Nigerian movie scene was in early 2015 when it purchased the online distribution rights to Kunle Afolayan’s ‘classic’ *October 1*”. After just five years, it has surpassed MultiChoice’s Showmax by 300% in audience base. Incidentally, it was the same Netflix that displaced and disrupted Blockbuster Video in America. At first, Netflix started its business by distributing Hollywood movies DVD through postal mails, with a free return stamped envelope. By doing this, it avoids the cost of office rentals and staff incurred by Blockbuster which enabled Netflix to charge only \$0.99 cents per movie disc, as against \$2.49 and up from Blockbuster rentals. As America’s internet penetration moved from telephone fax modem to broadband services, Netflix started deploying technology that created a more natural movie playback at the customer premises without physical DVD. This technology also enables immediate selection of movies to watch from thousands of its archives without any waiting period. This is not unlike what is transpiring in Nigeria presently.

### **Online Distribution Popularity in Nigeria and its Advantages**

Online distribution of Nollywood movies is not only becoming increasingly popular among Nigerian audience, but also among its producers (Omoera & Ojieson, 2022). An event that got impetus from Covid-19 pandemic lockdown is now becoming a regular occurrence even after all physical restrictions of social interaction has been removed for

over a year. It is, therefore, critical to examine why such distribution continues to be popular to this day of free social interactions. One of the first main concerns of any business operation is cost of production. Like any other business venture, movies are entertainment business from which profits are expected. Therefore, the less cost incurred by a producer, the closer they are to breaking even and start to making profit. Unlike in the previous business practice where a producer needs to outlay more cash to acquire a portable 16mm film projector for mobile self-distribution, online platforms distributors have eliminated the need for this extra cost by assuming responsibility for the distribution leg of the production to exhibition cycle of film business. In removing the extra cost burden of distribution chores from producers, they are already ahead by sharing the risk on their investments.

In addition to that, these online pay-to-view platforms are more efficient in their own business focus of distribution and can reach not only Nigerian audience, but also anywhere in the world (Ihidero 2020). Although worldwide distribution may also be possible through direct to home video process, there is, however, no guarantee that the copy purchased in Brooklyn, New York for example, is not a bootleg copy. Such copy may have compromised the producer's work during illegal replication that could have distorted the quality of production. Another advantage of the removal of distribution cost burden from the producer is the fact that, this freedom avails a producer the opportunity to focus their professional skills and financial resources on where they have a comparative advantage; the production of more films. By doing this, the producer is able to hone their skills which would likely result in more quality films. The online distributors are by the same token, able to widen their audience base by expanding into new markets. The single most important requirement for this business cycle to continue its growth is the internet connectivity availability. Incidentally, this issue of internet penetration has been improving in Nigeria lately. Just a year ago in December 2021, Nigerian newspapers were awash with the news of two 5G spectrum licenses being awarded to both MTN Nigeria Limited and Mafab Communications Limited at a cost of \$273.6 million each. These 5G licenses are now operational in Nigeria and it portends better connectivity for online streaming.

## Evaluating Online Platform Distribution Relationships with Nollywood

In the early days of Nigeria's cinema when the pioneers were experimenting through private equity to raise production funding and struggling not to default, one of their most pre-occupation was the issue of distribution. This is because without effective distribution, there is no revenue. The fact that there was never a robust distributional infrastructure network in Nigeria at the initial stage resulted in the maverick producers being checkmated by unscrupulous cinema theatre owners, many of who saw the local filmmakers as competition to their imported Bollywood and Kung Fu films. The foreigner businessmen tackled these local filmmakers directly and pre-emptively. They charged as much as fifty per cent and higher in some cases, of the box office takes. This resulted in little profit for the filmmakers, while at the same time, it prevents other would be producers to re-think their production adventure due to distribution bottle-neck. The cinema owners used just one salvo to diminish those who had produced movies and prevent others from embarking on production. That was the situation filmmakers like Hubert Ogunde and Ade "Love" Afolayan found themselves in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The problem tasked the producers to resolve.

Falling back on their experience as travelling theatre troupes that went from town to town to stage their theatre profession before being involved in cinema, the filmmakers ingeniously started taking their released films on road trips from town to town using make-shift halls and screens, as well as hotels and conference centres as their cinema theatres. With this arrangement, they were in total control of not only the box office revenue, but also the sales of snacks and drinks, including musical tapes and memorabilia of their films. Many of them had their own 16mm projectors with sound equipment and power generators, while Ogunde had a portable 35mm projector that was operated by his wives. As it was in the days of Ade Afolayan, so it is in the days of Kunle Afolayan who happens to be Ade's son and also follows in his father's footsteps as a filmmaker. The father's distribution challenge was the theatre owners, while the son's stemmed from piracy concern and later, Covid-19. Although there were several Nollywood films distributed through the Netflix, iROKOTv and Sceneone online pay to view platforms earlier, Kunle Afolayan's *Citation* (2020) debut on Netflix has become a game changer for Nollywood as it came at an auspicious time with nowhere else to go and others have followed suit.

## Conclusion

This research has given the history of Nollywood film distribution and exhibition business process in Nigeria. It established how various distribution methods have been adopted for Nollywood films over the years, with some of these distribution modes unique only to Nollywood. The reason for these distinct methods of distribution is mainly to overcome certain specific local problems that inhibited producers from easy distribution route that affected making adequate profits from their production works. Findings for this research are that the online pay to view distribution and exhibition methods are becoming more popular in Nigeria because of internet penetration and reduce data cost that ensures availability of these data through more robust broadband network investment in the country. This fact, coupled with the problems of covid-19 pandemic made it very attractive to film producers who had nowhere to exhibit their work especially during the pandemic lockdown. Producers of work released through such online platforms like Netflix must have seen the move as more financially beneficial to them, thereby resulting in their return even after the lockdown is over. The emerging trend of movie distribution in Nigeria has shown that online distribution channels will likely continue for a long time in Nigeria as one of the major avenues of distribution means. One of the reasons for this is because it relieves a producer of the financial and logistical headache involved in the business of distribution. These issues are now left in the hands of Netflix, iROKOTv and Sceneone TV of Ikorodu whose means of existence is to distribute content materials all over the world daily. This has, in turn, freed some Nollywood producers from distribution problems and enable them focus on their main work of production.

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