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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Stage of Relevance: Recasting the Role of Theater in a Digitally Dominated Generation

Michelle Dialogo – Tubilan*

Department of Communication and Media Studies, Cebu Normal University, Osmeña Boulevard, Cebu City, Philippines

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Theater provides a platform for exploring diverse perspectives, human behavior, and conflict, allowing audiences to engage with varied experiences while enabling artists to examine scenarios beyond their own realities (Arington,). It promotes truth-seeking, risk-taking, and the promotion of diverse voices. This study explores the enduring relevance of theater in a digitally driven, globalized society. Specifically, it examines the perceived influence, relevance, and acceptance of theater among the modern generation. Addressing the global challenge of cultural erosion amid rapid technological advancement, the study aligns with Sustainable Development Goals—SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). Framed by Jean-François Lyotard's Postmodern Theory, Raymond Williams' Cultural Theory, and René Girard's Mimetic Theory, the research argues that theater maintains significant emotional, educational, and cultural value despite digital disruptions. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates quantitative data from structured surveys with qualitative insights from thematic analysis to ensure methodological rigor and data triangulation. Findings show that theater builds emotional connection, promotes cultural literacy, strengthens educational outcomes, and encourages social interaction. Among the respondents, 45% view theater as highly relevant, while 55% consider it highly accepted in today's society. Based on the findings, this study concludes that theater remains highly relevant and significantly valued by the modern generation, maintaining its emotional, cultural, educational, and social impact despite the evolving challenges posed by digital entertainment and shifting audience preferences. In response, the study recommends policy and practice-oriented courses of action such as enhanced theater outreach programs, intercultural performance exchanges, and digital integration for accessibility.

INTRODUCTION

Theater provides a platform for exploring diverse perspectives, human behavior, and conflict, allowing audiences to engage with varied experiences while enabling artists to examine scenarios beyond their own realities (Arington. Speaking from personal experience as a theater actor, McShea shares that she is happiest whenever she is involved in theater. Even on the worst days, when she steps on stage, everything fades away, providing an escape. Remarkably, she does not need to perform or rehearse to feel better but simply listening to one of her favorite musicals can lift her spirits. Theater provides an outlet for her creativity and emotions, allowing her to express herself in ways she usually cannot. Additionally, bringing entertainment to people is incredibly rewarding and feels wonderful (McShea).

The Romans, who imitated theaters from ancient Greece, introduced amphitheaters as the first buildings used for theater events in Britain. These semi-circular constructions were initially made of wood and later of stone. They were open-air, with banked seating surrounding a high stage.

Fast forward to the millennium approaches, towns and cities sought ways to mark the occasion, with many opting for cultural ventures like opening new performing arts venues to capitalize on the

available financial opportunities. These new cultural centers became focal points for urban regeneration initiatives, resulting in accessible 'landmark' structures for everyone to use and enjoy (Has the Design of Theatre Buildings Changed Over Time).

During the three centuries of Spanish rule from 1565 to 1898, the Spanish colonizers, particularly the friars, recognized the power of theater as a tool for Christianizing the natives and attracting them to the pueblo, the foundation of Spain's empire in the archipelago. Consequently, the Spanish regime gave rise to and popularized various types of secular and religious plays. The former were usually staged to celebrate town fiestas, while the latter highlighted important Catholic liturgical feasts or seasons like Christmas, Lent, and Easter. Many of these plays and playlets remain popular among Christianized folk in rural areas, who compose the majority of the population. Among these plays, the most important is the komedya, also known as moro-moro, linambay, or arakyo. This play in verse was introduced in Spain in the 16th century and institutionalized in the 19th century. Theatrical spectacles of this kind can take from 3 to 15 hours and several sessions to perform (The History of Philippine Theatre).

On the other hand, theater has long been an effective instrument for social change, from Shakespeare's critiques of his time to modern plays such as Lin-Manuel Miranda's Hamilton, which redefines American history with a diverse cast.

According to O'Brien, theater's combination of narrative, acting, and audience participation promotes powerful emotional engagement, which leads to changes in social attitudes.

As contended by Jenkins, traditional theater's relevancy is frequently called into doubt in the age dominated by digital media. However, theater's versatility and capacity to incorporate new technologies and current challenges into its narratives make it an adaptive art form. Jenkins added that theater's significance now is emphasized by its ability to produce immersive experiences that appeal to the digital generation. For instance, performances with digital or interactive components may appeal to younger audiences looking for creative types of entertainment.

In China, a notable contrast with other Asian countries is its traditional lack of dance. Chinese classic theatre, or "opera," features dialogue with arias and recitatives, first referenced in the T'ang dynasty (618–907). Today's popular opera style developed during 19th-century Manchu rule. Empress Dowager, the last hereditary ruler, loved opera so much she built a triple-deck stage in Peking. Mei Lan-fang, a 20th-century actor and producer, revived ancient opera forms through scholarship. Chinese theatrical performances, starting in the early evening and ending after midnight, include several plays and scenes from famous dramas. The audience drinks tea, eats, and talks throughout, with no intermissions. The stage has a curved apron, a square rug, and a box for the orchestra, with no curtain or elaborate settings, highlighting the actors' costumes and makeup (Barker et al.).

In the Philippines, theater reflects the nation's diverse cultural traditions and historical influences. The dramatic forms include indigenous theater, characterized by rituals, mimetic dances, and customs of Malay origin. Spanish-influenced plays like the komedya, sinakulo, playlets, sarswela, and drama, and Anglo-American influenced theater, featuring bodabil, English-language plays, and modern works by Filipinos. These modern plays often use contemporary styles or revitalize traditional forms from both local and international sources (The History of Philippine Theatre).

Despite its nearly 2,500-year history and the discussions above, theater's developing influence and acceptance by modern generations still needs to be explored. The influence of contemporary theater on today's audiences needs to be adequately documented. The role of theater in shaping modern cultural and social dynamics requires further investigation, and understanding how it resonates with and influences contemporary society is crucial. In addition, there is a need to investigate theater's ability to stimulate cultural transformation and community unity in the present time.

Furthermore, this study investigates the transformative power of theater and how it exposes its influence, long-term relevance, and acceptance on the modern generation. As theater evolves and innovates, it remains an effective tool for expression, connection, and cultural reflection, demonstrating that its effect goes far beyond time and continues to shape the human experience.

Moreover, addressing the global challenge of cultural erosion amid rapid technological advancement, the study aligns with Sustainable Development Goals—SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

Theoretical Background

The study is supported by the literary theories of Jean Francois Lyotard's Postmodern, Raymond Williams' Cultural, and René Girard's Mimetic Theory.

The first literary theory used in this study is the Postmodern Theory authored by Jean Francois Lyotard in the 1950s. Postmodernism is associated with the post-World War II era's power shifts and dehumanization, as well as the rise of consumer capitalism. The term Postmodernism suggests a relationship with Modernism. Modernism was an earlier artistic trend that flourished in the early twentieth century. It has often been stated that Postmodernism is both an expansion of and an alternation of the Modernist position. It recognizes that big narratives conceal, obscure, and invalidate the inconsistencies, instabilities, and disparities associated with any social order. Postmodernism promotes "mini-narratives," which are stories that explain tiny activities and local events without claiming universality or finality. In addition, postmodernism recognizes that history, politics, and culture are huge accounts created by those in positions of power, containing erroneous and incomplete facts (Mambrol).

Postmodern theory investigates the way modern theater questions traditional narratives while celebrating cultural diversity and changeable identities. It challenges great stories and sets meanings, encouraging contemporary theater to explore with form, content, and representation. Theater reflects and tackles current issues by focusing on many views and breaking the lines between high and low culture. The focus of postmodernism on tearing down established customs and histories emphasizes theater's significance in transforming cultural and social views in today's world.

The second literary theory applied in this study is Cultural Theory coined by Raymond Williams in the 1980s. The term has been used in several attempts to define and explain the complexity of culture. Historically, these attempts have included discussions regarding the relationships between nature and culture, society and culture (which includes material social processes), the distinction between high and low culture, and the interplay between cultural custom, diversity, and difference. Cultural theory also entails dealing with concepts that frequently interact with those implied by the term culture. Ideologies and forms of consciousness are important examples, particularly in their collective expressions.

Cultural theory is relevant to the study of theater's effect, relevance, and acceptance among the modern generation because it examines whether theater mirrors and interacts with socioeconomic and political situations.

This approach examines how theatrical acts, ranging from ancient rituals to modern shows, shape and are shaped by cultural norms and power dynamics. Cultural materialism illustrates how theater may question or perpetuate ideological frameworks and social hierarchies by contextualizing and criticizing its representation in media, education, and society discourse. This viewpoint emphasizes theater's importance as entertainment and an avenue for cultural reform and civic dialogue in today's diversified and changing world (Cultural Theory).

The third and last literary theory utilized in this study is the Mimetic Theory formulated by René Girard in the mid-20th century.

Mimetic theory is a model for investigating human behavior using the concept of mimetic want, in which shared desires amplify and spark belief in the value of an item, ultimately leading to conflict. René Girard contends that this escalation can be tempered by the scapegoat mechanism, which restores social order by collectively criticizing an arbitrary other for turmoil. This method is dependent on everyone agreeing that the scapegoat is to blame. Girard's examination of "legends of origin" demonstrates how cultures employ scapegoats to prevent bloodshed and maintain order. He contends that human society is based on ritualized scapegoating, motivated by lessons from both Jewish and Christian texts regarding victims' innocence.

The mimetic theory thus includes three components: mimetic desire, the victimization mechanism, and revelation, each of which reveals deeper insights into human interactions and the potential of peace (What Is Mimetic Theory).

These three literary theories serve as the study's foundation and provide the critical basis for conducting and analyzing the study.

Statement of the Problem

This study seeks to examine the continuing relevance of theater in the modern generation, particularly in the context of a rapidly evolving digital and technological landscape. It aims to investigate the diverse influence of theater, focusing on its impact in terms of emotional connection, cultural enrichment, educational value, and social interaction. Furthermore, the study explores the perceived degree of relevance of theater by classifying responses as highly relevant, relevant, moderately relevant, or not relevant at all. It also examines the level of acceptance of theater among the current generation, identifying categories such as highly accepted, accepted, moderately accepted, and not accepted at all. Based on these findings, the study aims to recommend courses of action that can sustain and enhance theater's presence and significance in contemporary society.

Significance of the Study. The study on the transforming power of theater is significant for contemporary society and cultural analysts seeking to understand its influence, relevance, and acceptance among today's generation.

Furthermore, in the disciplines of literature and communication, this study provides valuable insights for educators and students, stimulating lively class discussions, workshops, and forums. Teachers can use the study's findings to spark thought-provoking conversations about theater's modern relevance, while students can get a deeper appreciation for its cultural effect and evolving acceptability.

Scope and Limitations of the Study. The scope of the study is the investigation of the relevance of the theater to the modern generation. Regarding limitations, the study only focuses on the influence, relevance, and acceptance of the theater among contemporary audiences, and the proposed courses of action based on the study's findings.

Review of Related Readings

Kiara Pipino, in her article titled, "Why Theater," argues that theater immerses audiences in live stories, with real people experiencing them before their eyes. This allows viewers to step into the character's shoes and feel their emotions. The proximity and shared space create an intense experience, fostering empathy and community. Unlike movies, which offer a more removed and superficial connection, theater achieves a deeper level of engagement. A recent study shows that students who watch a play better understand the story, improve their vocabulary, and develop greater empathy and tolerance. The theater also teaches social behavior by providing examples and opportunities to learn from them. Through offering possibilities for learning and by setting examples, the theater also teaches social conduct.

Both demonstrate how theater may engage viewers in real-time narratives and promote empathy and a sense of community using shared experiences. Pipino highlights the distinct engagement that theater offers in contrast to movies, which is supported by the findings of the study showing young people who see plays have higher levels of empathy and tolerance as well as better story comprehension and vocabulary. Furthermore, both sources emphasize the importance of theater in social behavior education, demonstrating its lasting impact and applicability in today's society.

Jordan, in her blog titled "Is Theater Still Relevant in the Modern Age?" asserts that theater delves into the human experience, capturing both the positives and negatives of existence. Attending a play offers audiences the chance to absorb these experiences and, with a willing partner, discuss them afterward. For years, Jordan took her children to plays, finding it an opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations and learn their insights on various topics.

This article reflects the present study's findings on how theater promotes meaningful conversations, enhances understanding, and facilitates empathy, highlighting its continued influence and relevance in the modern generation.

Theatre effectively tackles taboo topics that society often avoids. It provides a secure environment where awkward talks can take place. Through highlighting these concerns, theater encourages people to face their prejudices, question their ideas, and have important conversations. A lot of

people have seen a play that caused them to reevaluate their position on a contentious issue, demonstrating the powerful influence of theater (Evans).

Hughes and Wilson, in their study "Playing a Part: The Impact of Youth Theatre on Young People's Personal and Social Development," explore how participation in youth theatre affects young people's growth. Their findings suggest that youth theatre plays a crucial role in positively contributing to both personal and social development.

The study discussed above which examines how youth theatre participation encourages personal and social growth, complements the present study conducted. Both studies underscore theater's significant role in shaping individuals, particularly the younger generation. They highlight theater's influence and ongoing relevance and acceptance in contemporary society.

The study "Theatre Art in the Information Age: Youth Audience Perception Features," by Savenkova et al., looks into how teenagers view modern versions of classic plays that are taught in schools. The study reveals the interests of high school students as well as their distinct perspectives on postmodern experimental performances and classical works. The insufficiency of existing approaches to cultivating artistic sense in the educational system is brought into focus by the contradiction between students' requirements for understanding theatrical art and the chances for learning offered by Russian theaters.

The aforementioned study draws from extensive experience in examining the youth audience's artistic perception of modern theatrical art.

Moreover, its relevance to the current research lies in the shift in modern adolescents' perception of art, driven by qualitative changes in the sociocultural landscape within the information society.

In his study titled "Generations Apart: Exploring the Generation Gap in Theatre," Hesus Briones examines the relationships among three different ethnic groups—Jewish, Chinese, and Italian as depicted in various plays. The study begins with an analysis of "Fiddler on the Roof," where Briones identifies four distinct types of generation gaps which are technology, culture, religion, and assimilation. Through this examination, the study seeks to uncover the basic principles of these gaps and their portrayal in theatrical works.

This analysis is relevant to the current study since both look at how different audiences' perceptions and responses to theater are influenced by different circumstances. A qualitative method is also applied in both studies.

The aforementioned reviews of related literature and studies provide essential context for the topic discussed in this study. They also help prevent duplication and appropriately credit other researchers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employs a mixed-method design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively examine the relevance of theater in the modern generation. Specifically, a researcher-developed Google Form survey questionnaire is utilized to assess theater's influence in terms of emotional connection, cultural enrichment, educational value, and social interaction, as well as perceptions of its relevance and acceptance. The study is situated within Cebu City, with a particular focus on Colon Street, a historically and culturally significant site long associated with cinema and live performances. To ensure relevant and contextually grounded data, a purposive sample of twenty (20) respondents composed of ten males and ten females aged 18 to 35 is selected based on their interest in, exposure to, or involvement in cultural and theatrical activities. Importantly, respondents who do not meet the inclusion criteria, such as non-residency in Cebu City or lack of recent engagement with theater, are excluded from the study. This targeted sampling ensures that the data collected accurately reflects the perspectives of the modern generation in relation to traditional cultural forms. Furthermore, the research instrument underwent expert validation to ensure clarity, reliability, and alignment with the study's objectives.

To structure the data collection, the study follows four phases: (1) assessing the influence of theater, (2) evaluating its degree of relevance, (3) determining its level of acceptance, and (4) identifying proposed courses of action based on participant insights.

As part of the analytical process, quantitative data are examined using descriptive statistics including frequency distributions and percentage analysis while qualitative responses are interpreted through thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and nuanced perspectives.

To facilitate interpretation, findings are presented in both tabular and narrative formats. Throughout the process, strict adherence to ethical research practices is maintained, including the acquisition of informed consent and the protection of respondent confidentiality. By employing a methodologically rigorous and ethically sound approach, this study ensures data credibility, supports in-depth analysis, and provides culturally responsive recommendations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Influence Analysis. This section presents the influence of theater in the modern generation.

Table 1. Influence of Theater in the Modern Generation

Influence	Frequency n=20	Percentage	Reason
Emotional Connection	10	50%	• Immersing oneself in the characters • Enhances empathy • To learn the right emotional response • It channels emotions and experiences
Cultural Enrichment	5	25%	• Embracing the dialect • It teaches cultural lessons for daily life • Cultural enhancement from diverse characters
Educational Value	4	20%	• It teaches the importance of deep social awareness • Theater plays give education • Theaters are prevalent in educational institutions.
Social Interaction	1	5%	• It establishes social interaction among the characters

Table 1 shows that in a study involving 20 respondents, various aspects of theater's influence are explored and quantified. The data reveals that emotional connection is the most frequently cited influence. Of the respondents, 50% say that becoming fully immersed in the characters increases empathy. This suggests that deeply interacting with theatrical stories and characters may result in a greater capacity for emotional comprehension and empathy for other people. R2 cites:

Every time I watch live theater at school, I feel thrilled. The themes often reflect society's reality, making me think about my own experiences. I can relate to the characters' struggles, creating a deep emotional connection.

When the actors, dialogue, and music are well chosen, it moves me to tears and deepens my connection to the performance.

According to Isabelle Gatt's article, "Theatre—A Space for Human Connection," strategists have always seen theater as a means of disrupting audiences' comfort zones. Getting the audience to think critically, feel something, or both is part of engaging them. According to Aristotle of ancient Greece, comedy revealed human stupidity, absurdity, and societal defects. In contrast, the goal of Greek tragedy consisted of arousing strong feelings of violence and pity in the audience. At the same time, they remained safely enclosed in the theater, providing a healing experience. Tragedy cleanses the audience's emotions by revealing a hero's terrifying weakness and eventual fall.

Cultural enrichment emerged as another significant influence, noted by 25% of respondents. This component involves integrating the tone of voice and cultural differences that are portrayed on stage, which respondents believe it as applicable to daily life. Additionally, it is noted that seeing

varied characters in dramatic contexts enhances culture by promoting a fuller grasp and respect for cultural diversity. R7 explains:

Based on my experience, I'm promoting our culture to the world. By using our dialect, I'm sharing our beliefs and ways of life with people from different communities.

The educational value is recognized by 20% of respondents, who emphasized theater's role in developing a profound sense of social awareness.

Theater plays, as stated by respondents, offer educational approaches to social concerns and inspire audiences to go beyond superficial learning and critically interact with society as a whole dynamics. Further, the importance of theaters in educational settings is highlighted as they support learning by giving students the chance to explore different cultures and express themselves artistically. R18 remarks:

The educational value of theatrical plays shows me the importance of deeply understanding social issues and helping affected communities. Sharing this knowledge emphasizes our role in building a better Philippine society and shaping its history.

With this, Hisham Saad Zaghloul's study, "The Theater in the Educational Context," highlights how theater enhances students' communication skills, self-esteem, and self-actualization. However, it identifies gaps like inadequate teacher training and poor content quality in Egypt's education system. Despite issues of funding and technical capabilities, the study suggests that stakeholders can use these findings to improve theater practices and policies for better academic outcomes.

Lastly, 5% of respondents brought up the social interaction between characters in shows. This component illustrates how theater may represent and promote social interactions by presenting relationships and behaviors that are similar to those found in real-world social settings. R20 claims:

Engaging with theater characters and diverse audiences helps me develop new skills, enhancing both personal productivity and social interaction.

Overall, Table 1 indicates that theater is a multidimensional medium that reflects emotional connection, cultural enrichment, educational value, and social interaction.

Degree of Relevance of the Theater Analysis. This section presents various degrees of relevance of theater in the modern generation, which can be classified as relevant, moderately relevant, highly relevant, and not relevant at all.

Table 2. Relevance of the Theater in the Modern Generation

Degree of Relevance	Frequency n=20	Percentage	Reason
Highly relevant	9	45%	• Offers a distinctive live entertainment experience versus pre-recorded media • It sparks conversations, promotes culture, and builds empathy. • It tackles relevant issues • Theater impacts its audience uniquely
Relevant	3	15%	• It sparks conversations, promotes culture, and builds empathy. • It tackles relevant issues • Theater impacts its audience uniquely
Moderately relevant	8	40%	• Not everyone can afford theater tickets • Rarely done in schools, and people prefer watching movies • The audience consists solely of theater enthusiasts

The majority of respondents which is nine out of 20 consider theater as highly relevant. This impression is mostly due to the theater's ability to offer live entertainment that sets it apart from

material that has already been recorded. The theater is also appreciated for its capacity to encourage cultural expression, initiate interesting discussions, and develop sentiment among spectators. Its importance as a vehicle for social critique and reflection is made even greater by its focus on addressing current issues in society. R10 states:

Today, theater is highly relevant because it plays a crucial role in advocating for social justice and addressing pressing issues such as inequality and discrimination. It inspires action and serves as a platform for talent expression, benefiting both creators and audiences.

As William Shakespeare famously puts it, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." It highlights theater's enduring relevance as a mirror of life, where every performance and story enlightens, entertains, and inspires reflection across generations.

On the other hand, three out of 20 respondents, or a smaller percentage of those surveyed, believe theater is important because it helps to address today's social problems and preserve cultural history. According to these respondents, theater has the power to both preserve cultural traditions and elicit thought through theme exploration and compelling narrative. R3 contends:

For me, theater remains relevant in the modern generation by preserving our cultural traditions and enriching the performing arts.

A substantial proportion of respondents which is eight out of 20 view theater as moderately relevant. This point of view takes into account realistic factors, such as the cost of theater tickets, which some people cannot afford. Moreover, a perceived gap in theater's mainstream cultural absorption is suggested by the finding that it is less frequently included in educational settings than in movies. Regardless of these challenges, the theater continues to draw a devoted following of fans who value its distinctive features and cultural contributions. R8 declares:

Theater has changed from its historical origins to now. It's still kind of moderately relevant, given that it's written in the present day, but most of its audience are enthusiasts. The current generation finds increased significance in the emergence of new technology.

In addition, none of the respondents perceived theater as not relevant at all as shown in Table 2.

Collectively, the analysis in Table 2 indicates the variety of viewpoints regarding the relevance of theater in the modern generation, from its artistic and social influence to practical considerations and the dedicated audience it continues to attract despite difficulties.

Degree of Acceptance of the Theater Analysis. This section explains the acceptance of theater in the modern generation.

Table 3. Degree of Acceptance of the Theater in the Modern Generation

Degree of Acceptance	Frequency n=20	Percentage	Reason
Highly accepted	11	55%	• It is one of the entertainment platforms • Theater existed long before the digital era. • It embodies culture and society authentically • Theater is evolving with new stories and stage designs
Accepted	4	20%	• The best way to express emotions and make individuals unique • Themes are evolving with time. • It is neither a relic nor a trend for today's generation • It teaches a moral lesson
Moderately accepted	5	25%	• For enjoyment and relaxation • It struggles to reach a wider audience due to digital entertainment's rise • Gen z prefers concerts over theater
Not accepted at all	0	0%	

Table 3 implies the degree of acceptance of theater among the present generation, which reflects a wide range of perspectives. In the table, 55% of respondents find theater as highly accepted due to its long history as a right cultural and entertainment platform that evolves with new stories and stage innovations. They consider it as an essential connection between previous traditions and modern-day narratives, emphasizing its ongoing significance today. R20 cites:

The theater has made significant strides in storytelling and stage design. I am grateful to technology because performances can now reach broader audiences, who can enjoy them from home and even rewatch them at their leisure.

In an increasingly divided world, theatre holds a magical ability to unite people. Imagine being in a crowded theatre, surrounded by individuals from all walks of life. Together, they share a collective experience where laughter and applause blend into a symphony of unity. It serves as an important reminder that, despite their differences, they are all part of humanity (Evans).

Table 3 demonstrates how 20% of respondents consider theater as accepted for emotional expression and a sense of self. They admire its developing themes, which address current issues and personal stories, and see it not as an outdated medium, but as one that teaches morality and develops empathy. They regard theater as a distinct art form that enriches cultural and personal experiences by encouraging anticipation and welcoming opposing ideas. R8 utters:

Theater is accepted to me as a performing artist because it reflects my choices in terms of content and presentation. It is an effective medium for attracting and educating people about crucial social issues that require attention and solutions.

On the other hand, 25% of the respondents moderately accept theater as a source of relaxation and enjoyment, though they recognize its challenge in competing with digital entertainment. They appreciate theater for its ability to offer meaningful escape and social experiences, even as younger generations favor alternatives like concerts. R4 articulates:

The new generation is influenced by numerous factors, and theater may not always seem appealing to them. Many of us Gen Zs would likely choose attending concerts over watching theater.

Interestingly, no respondents expressed theater as not accepted at all. This indicates that, while the surveyed respondents have varied degrees of acceptance and involvement with theater, none completely disregards its worth or relevance in today's culture.

As a whole, each category in Table 3 provides differing viewpoints on the role of theater in today's society, stating its complex appeal and ongoing challenges in the face of changing entertainment choices.

Courses of Action. Based on the study's findings, these courses of action seek to build on theater's advantages through Enhancing Theater Outreach Programs, Intercultural Exchanges, and Digital Integration for Accessibility.

Enhanced Theater Outreach Programs. Theaters can create concentrated workshops and community interactions to help individuals improve their capacity for empathy and emotional intelligence through play. Theaters may elicit strong emotional responses and promote social awareness by reaching out to schools, community centers, and different groups through live performances and conversations.

Intercultural Exchanges. Cebu theaters may produce onstage programs incorporating cultural diversity, collaborating with foreign theaters to present varied stories and perspectives.

Workshops and festivals allow participants to study and appreciate different cultural practices, dialects, and societal norms, enriching local experiences while stimulating global discussion using artistic expression.

Digital Integration for Accessibility. Theaters may integrate digital technology to attract younger crowds and compete with digital entertainment. This includes live-streaming performances, interactive digital content based on productions, and virtual reality experiences. Adopting digital platforms widens reach, attracts tech-savvy spectators, and improves access to theater arts.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, this study concludes that theater remains highly relevant and significantly valued by the modern generation, maintaining its emotional, cultural, educational, and social impact despite the evolving challenges posed by digital entertainment and shifting audience preferences. To sustain and enhance this relevance, it is recommended that Cebuano playwrights craft emotionally resonant and socially reflective narratives that connect with contemporary audiences. Moreover, theater practitioners are encouraged to explore the broader artistic and civic role of theater, thereby expanding its appeal across diverse demographic groups. Future research may focus on the intersection of theater and digital innovation, particularly on how live performances can integrate technological advancements without compromising cultural authenticity and communal experience. Lastly, the implementation of the proposed courses of action such as enhanced outreach, intercultural exchanges, and digital accessibility may serve as strategic pathways to advance theater best practices and reinforce its place as a dynamic and inclusive cultural platform in today's society.

Authors' Contributions

This scholarly work was conceptualized, designed, and written by Michelle Dialogo-Tubilan, DA. She independently completed all stages of the research from data collection to analysis and interpretation, ensuring the study's quality and integrity.

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