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Implications of Cultural Diffusion in Nigeria Through the Television Medium: A Survey of Selected Youths in Imo State

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Abstract

The impact of television on cultural diffusion is not in doubt; technological advancement of the television medium has turned the entire world into a global village. Developed countries influence the less developed ones with their culture through modern information dissemination apparatuses; these cultural influences have both positive and negative impacts on the ethical values of youths in a developing country like Nigeria. The study looks at the cultural implications and influences of television on youth cultural integration. Relevant literature bordering on cultural integration as well as the impact of globalization on culture was reviewed, premised on the 'cultivation theory' developed by George Gerbner. Survey method involving the use questionnaires was employed to articulate the extent of media influence on the values and beliefs of purposively selected youths in Imo State, Nigeria. Empirical data from the survey was presented and analysis produced a number of vital findings: television provided a globalization mechanism that encouraged cultural diffusion and migration; television was perceived as an important relaxation tool; television can be employed in improving ethical standards; youths are vulnerable to foreign ideas from satellite and cable television. Conclusively, the study recommends that television should be employed in improving traditional values through indigenous cultural information dissemination and expounding national heritage.

Keywords: Culture; television; youths; values

INTRODUCTION

Television is a shinning force for molding attitudes and public opinion. Apart from offering sights and sounds, it is also able to make dramatic representations of people and products to a global audience. It is a communication medium necessary for the maintenance of a meaningful and functional society hence it helps in binding and transmitting cultural heritage from generation to generation (McQuail, 2010). Culture is composed of the norms, values and ethical standards that are used to identify individuals, groups or communities; it is the totality of a people or an area's way of life. For a culture to be identified there must be an acceptable symbol that is common to all. Okonkwo (2008) describes culture as a social heritage or learned behavior, inherited from generation to generation.

The invention of television has brought about transformation and globalization; information now flows across national boundaries resulting to dilution of strict adherence to cultural instincts. Evolution of television in Nigeria started in 1959 by western regional government of Nigeria with the objective of improving the educational system within the region. The eastern and northern regional governments followed suit in 1960 and 1962 respectively, claiming the

same objective as was professed by the western region government but were found wanting as all of them turned commercial later on. In today's Nigeria, television is associated with promoting and enlightening intellectual attitudes of youths towards culture. Programs in drama, soap opera, documentary, Nollywood films and discussion programs aired on various cable TV providers (like Multi choice, MY TV and Easy NET) and local stations (like AIT, Channels, NTA and IBC) are geared towards sensitization and integration of young people to the ethical values of the Nigerian society. Majority of programs on television are reflective of the diversity of their audiences' interest, and cultural values (McDonald, 2009). In a cultural, religious, and ethnically diverse country like Nigeria with over 250 ethnic groups, television plays a vital role in integrating their diverse interests. Programming on television has an important role to play in shaping social meaning, bearing in mind that communication contents determine the way local or global mass media systems will affect people's social experiences (Oso & Pate, 2011).

Globalization has taken the world beyond modernity to what can be described as information society; advances in information technology have made possible easy communication of ideas and views between people of diverse nationality. The ability to freely communicate without hindrance could generate mutual relationship as well as appreciation of individual problems. The advent of satellite television and the resultant multi-channel global television has fastened the globalization process. Proponents of western cultural imperialism as reported by Tabassum (2012) believe that globalization brings about homogenization that facilitates cultural uniformity throughout the world. Against this backdrop, television being a medium of dissemination of global information will be surveyed to ascertain its capability to promote or violate ethical values in Nigeria.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Television programming in Nigeria is not always commercial in nature; they sometime engage themselves in transfer of technology and know-how. Importation of foreign programs into local television stations, in addition to satellite services and cable networks have overtime occupied the television screen in most Nigerian homes. Often times, the globalized television channels (satellite services and cable network) aggressively show contents that cater for the youth which in turn produce convergence that imposes a homogeneous taste unto larger, more diverse audiences and content integration for youths. This development according to experts is capable of cultivating the spark of change amongst our youths from cultural norms to foreign values, as well as offering us opportunity to present and portray ourselves to the world in a more palatable form to change our battered image abroad. On that note, the study looks at the impact these foreign programs have on youths to ascertain the extent they contribute to ethical and cultural violations in Nigeria.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1. <u>Is television viewing advantageous or disadvantageous to cultural integration of youths in Nigeria?</u>
- 2. What are the damaging/beneficial effects of television on youth-cultural integration?
- 3. <u>How can television, especially, cable network and satellite services help in projecting Nigeria's rich culture across boundaries?</u>

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK & REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

This study is hinged on cultivation theory developed by Gerbner (1977). The theory proposes that repetitive or persistent consumption of certain media content leads to change of attitude, values and adoption. The theory, according to its proponent suggests that mass media,

especially television, is responsible for molding viewers' perception of social reality. Analyzing the theory, Anaeto et al., (2008) emphasized that television has a cultural function of socialization and acculturation; television indirectly exposes certain ideas and knowledge one would not have ordinarily known. As it relates to this study, it implies that the abandonment of local media content in television air waves gradually results to diminishing of values, beliefs and norms. With the proliferation of westernized media contents, youths in Nigeria have adopted a different social relationship away from what was traditionally obtainable in our norms and values; this may grossly affect the assimilation of culture in the Nation.

TELEVISION AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION

Burton (2010: 296) exhaustibly summarized four global media landscapes underscored by media and communications scholar, Annabelle Sreberny. In one of the forms, Sreberny mentioned that global does not mean universal; global television affects only leisure and social lives of the developing world, and not their inherent cultures and beliefs. This is evident in the way local audiences in the developing world make selective choices of their media use. In the same vein, Chua (2008) insists that the situation brought about by the massive influx of western values through audio-visual medium is not as dire as people perceived it to be; individuals still abides by most traditional norms and values despite sharing the same preference for western dresses and music as other young people. Meanwhile, there are positive sides to the assimilation of foreign media content; particularly its effect in helping to eliminate devilish cultural practices and enhance good ones. Culture of maltreatment of the widow and relegating women to the background are being eliminated in some quarters today. There is good number of women in political office than was obtainable in the past. Youths are given the opportunity to air their views and contribute to the helm of affairs in the country, hence the establishment of the youth parliament. In the opinion of Pais (2006), television has helped in the development of the world especially in disseminating information and carrying enlightenment programs that have helped human development both in the rural and urban areas. Many strategies and slogans were initiated in both present and past governments aimed at portraying the country positively. To that effect, the Nigerian Ministry of Information designed a logo and slogan; "Nigeria Rebrands: Good People, Great Nation" meant to upturn negative perception and negative attitudes of foreigners and Nigerians alike towards the country. During the launching and unveiling of the product in 2009, the then vice president Goodluck Jonathan made a remarkable statement:

"The campaign signals a new dawn in our collective quest to entrench a culture of moral rearmament and ingrained positive values of resilience, diligence, transparency, accountability, and selfless service" (Oshodin, 2009).

The advent of new technology in television medium thwarted everything; information now flows across national boundaries hence the dilution of strict adherence to cultural instincts. In Nigeria, the dilution of original culture is evident in youth dressing patterns, spoken words and other social adaptations. Youths prefer to wear western dresses, speak with foreign accents, play foreign music and watch their movies so much so that they perceive themselves to be westerners (Okonkwo, 2008). For instance, the traditional Igbo dressing of wrapper and blouse for women has gradually turned to mini skirt and hanging top that exposes the body. The boys wear sagging trouser, exposing their pants or sometimes buttocks. Perhaps, in recognition of the extent of our cultural extinction, authorities in many Nigerian higher institutions have placed a ban on illicit and immoral dressings and passed a rule that requires decent or traditional dresses to be worn at all times in their areas of jurisdiction (Olori, 2003; GNA, 2014 & Belo-Osagie et al., 2015). Ayakoroma (2010) lamented on the extent of challenges

as regards the dress culture in Nigeria; many Nigerians have obvious preference to western style of dressing than indigenous dressing due to over indulgence in consuming of western media content. Contrarily, Baran (2010) insists that though globalized television content effect is undisputable, the internal government regulation over infiltration of foreign media and its content has helped to keep erosion of indigenous cultures in check.

THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON CULTURE

Globalization has given us the ability to freely communicate without hindrance as well as generate mutual relationship and appreciation of our individual problems. The dominance of Europe and America in world affairs brought about cold war amongst countries of the world (Hobsbawn, 1999). Each region, in its bid to free itself from such dominance formulated its own economic platform to carter for its welfare (Kraidy, 2005). Sequel to that, globalization facilitates free flow of ideas between people across the borders which could lead to cultural integration or separation. Unfortunately, African youths have a long history of migration owing to their economic dependence on the economy of either Europe or America (Kohnert, 2007); this movement has resulted to a high level of cultural diversity or even erosion of cultural values amongst our youths. Foreign programs in our local television stations could be perceived as a strategy aimed at overpowering the cultural values of Nigerian youths; Abide (2011) opines that Nigerians copy, and imitate the west, especially America and Britain without understanding why the west live their lives the way they do. However, owing to the ability of the television medium to not only impart knowledge but to also promote action on the audience, culture integration programs are being encouraged by Nigerian government and aired on their controlled air waves. Youths in all spheres, being the drivers and victims of change are easily affected by the transformation of social change brought about by globalization (Jegede & Idowu, 2012). Nyamnjoh (2008) opined that instead of achieving convergence, globalization appears to accelerate differences, heterogeneities and structures of inequality. No wonder, an open letter written to Barrack Obama by Aliba Prossie, a Ugandan, who categorically stated how moral-less the American society is, citing example with incessant sporadic shootings in American schools by under aged pupils and their intention to persuade African countries to relax enacted anti-gay law in their various countries (Prossie, 2014). Burton (2010:292) describes globalization 'as something of an illusion'; many countries (especially developing countries) have limited access to new media content and have regulation on their media content to mark borders. However, he agrees that globalization is applied fully to people or countries whose material and cultural history allow them to think global – the developed world. To him, globalization is a myth.

TELEVISION AND NIGERIAN YOUTHS

Nigeria is a country of diverse ethnic, religious and cultural entities. Irrespective of these diversities, the youths seem to tow the same line in preference of media consumption. The ability of television to use sound, visual and motion in transmitting programs gives it the advantage of easy conviction. Iyorza (2014: 308) argues that global television employs the combination of sight, sound, motion, color, drama, and persuasiveness to achieve creativity, variety, and flexibility. Therefore television has the ability to influence the views, beliefs and norms of people, especially the youth. Global television poses a strong impact on the cultural intuition of consumers through its contents. It is used in promotion of culture either intentionally or otherwise. The effect can be positive or negative depending on the understanding of its consumers. For instance, many television channels, put advertisement of alluring products in between popular programs like sports, and news to capture the interest of unsuspected youths in underdeveloped world (Ayozie et al., 2011). Drama series, movies, international television acts from the American continent, India and Europe have the lifestyles,

speech, and general behavior of the country of origin embedded in the presentations, which in turn are transmitted to less developed countries with inadequate media machinery (Iyorza, 2014). A study conducted by Obono & Madu (2010) revealed that globalized television news on social realities in Africa is more negative than positive; this in turn affects the cultural, political, and sociological perception of the people. The situation has been curtailed in Nigeria with the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) mandating that television stations must produce up to 70% indigenous programs (NBC, 2009); this policy is aimed at curtailing cultural and media imperialism. According to Hasan (2014: 647), the audio-visual characteristics of television gives young people the ability to share 'cultural experiences' because the level of audience involvement generated by television is so high that it can act as an agent of social change. Cultural programming can affect values appraisal of art and cultural heritage. However, inadequate norms and values formation due to unsatisfactory parental guidance could push youths to negative interpretation of television contents. Therefore, the question is in what direction is televisions' social change coming? Is it towards the formation of acceptable ethical standards or are the youths being lured to foreign values?

METHODOLOGY

Survey method was adopted to generate data for the study. This method is considered appropriate because it is capable of obtaining information from a large number of people, and offers the researchers an opportunity to conduct the study in a real life situation (Nachmias & Frankfort-Nachmias, 1996). Questionnaire was the main instrument of data generation.

POPULATION

The population of the study consists of all the youths in Imo state under the umbrella of Community Government Council (CGC) across the 637 autonomous communities in Imo state. The population is restricted to youths between the age brackets of 18-35. This is because Nigerian national youth policy defines youths as comprising all young people between the afore-mentioned age ranges (NYP Nigeria, 2009). It is also believed that youths in such age range exhibit traits and lifestyle pertaining to dressing, speech, social relationship, and entertainment synonymous to activities of youths in other parts of the country.

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Youths in the study were stratified into two categories: educational level and level of exposure. Based on this, bachelor's degree graduates, bachelor's degree undergraduates, senior school certificate examination (SSCE) holders, First School Leaving Certificate holders (FSLC) holders and FSLC attempted fell into first category while youth that are exposed to media information content and those that are not were in second category. Youths that have second degrees were intentionally left out because they are believed to be either above the age range or are not active members of the youth forum due to their level of academic exposure. Purposively, 90 respondents were selected from each of the strata with the help of the youth leader in each of the autonomous communities. This brings the total number of youths surveyed to 450.

INSTRUMENTATION

The major instrument employed in this study is questionnaire, containing both open-ended and close-ended questions. It was prepared by the researchers, validated by colleagues, pretested and found reliable. Based on the objectives of the research, 450 copies of questionnaires were administered proportionately on the respondents. Though 450 copies were distributed, only 410 were retrieved. Majority of the un-returned copies of questionnaire came from the copies given to low educational level among the respondents. This was because most of them

thought the study was meant to witch-hunt them therefore, were afraid of possible sanction.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Age Bracket	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
18-21	70	17.07%
22-25	80	19.51%
26-28	85	20.73%
29 -31	90	21.95%
32-35	85	20.73%
Total	410	100%

Table 1: Age Bracket of Respondents

The above table shows that majority of the respondents fall within the age bracket of 26-28 years (20.73%), 29-31 (21.95%) and 32-35 representing 20.73%. The age bracket actually forms youth category that are more exposed to media technology and are always sensitive to change.

<u>Item</u>	Frequency	Percentage
FSLC	70	17.07%
ATTEMPTED		
FSLC	80	19.51%
SSCE	83	20.24%
UNDER	87	21.22%
DEGREE/CERT		
DEGREE/CERT	90	21.95%
TOTAL	410	100%

Table 2 shows that 70 representing 17.07% attempted primary education, 80 (19.51%) had FSLC, 83 (20.24%) studied up to secondary school, 87 (21.95%) are still in higher institution while 90 (21.95%)r have graduated from higher institution.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Yes	300	73.17%
No	110	26.83%
Total	410	100%

TABLE 3: Number and percentage of respondents that have access to television

The table above indicates that a whooping 300 (73.17%) number of respondents, have complete access to television while 110 (26.83%) have minimal access to television due to either lack of electricity to power the set or do not own it at home.

Age Bracket	Frequency	Percentage
18-21	20	4.8%
22-25	30	7.3%
26-28	29	7.07%
29 -31	46	11.22%
32-35	40	9.76%
Total	165	40.24%

Table 4: Television program content helps in integration and assimilation of culture on youths

From the table above, only 20 out of 90 numbers of youths between the age brackets of 18-21 that were given questionnaires agreed that television content helps in imbibing cultural traits on youths. 30 out of 120 numbers of the respondents in age range of 22-25 gained cultural

integration through television, another 29 number of respondents from 89 in 26-28 age range earlier given the questionnaire affirmed the advantages of television to youth-cultural integration. 46 representing 11.22% out of the respondents in age range of 29-31 agree; 40 (9.76%) out of 51 respondents received cultural integration information through the television. In all, only 165 numbers of respondents out of 410 representing 40.24% affirmed to the positive use of television to integrate youths to good cultural values.

<u>Age</u>	Positive	Percentage	Negative	Percentage	Total
Bracket					
18-21	70	17.07%	-	Nill	70
22-25	80	19.51%	-	Nill	80
26-28	85	20.73%	-	Nill	85
29 -31	90	21.95%	-	Nill	90
32-35	85	20.73%	-	Nill	85
Total	410	100%	-	Nill	410

Table 5: Television affects the youths.

All the respondents ranked television influence very high. They revealed that television, especially, cable television is like a mirror to the world to them, and therefore they regard and see it as extremely influential. They spend more time watching television because it provides them with entertainment when they are alone. They all agree that it is the best way to unwind and alleviate boredom. They unanimously agreed that television is the second best way to relax after music.

Item	Percentage
Local television	60%
Cable Network	10%
Satellite Services	5%

Table 6: Television positive portrayal of rich cultural heritage of Nigeria

From the table above, local television positive portrayal of Nigerian culture ranks highest. Cable network only minimally portrayed Nigerian good aspects while satellite services barely talks of good aspects of Nigerian culture.

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nigerian youths have significant access to globalised media to the extent that they use it for transnational connections thus resulting in globalized migration as well as culture. Younger people within the adopted age range for this study saw television as a tool for keeping busy, especially when they are alone. There are obvious differences in the extent of influence on viewers between program contents of cable network and satellite services and that of local television stations. Local stations tend to run programs that protect and promote culture than the cable or satellite counterparts mainly in compliance to Nigerian Broadcasting Commission's policy and regulations that television stations must have up to 70% indigenous sourced programs (NBC, 2009). Most young people love television because it helps them to curb boredom when they are alone in the house as revealed in the study.

In the question of the station that promotes the national interest best, local stations ranked best. They have programs in form of soup operas, movie, documentary, drama, talk shows that they use to inculcate cultural interest on youths. The study also revealed that globalization is part of the challenges facing Nigerian culture apart from mass media. According to Pais (2006), culture has been grossly influenced and altered through trade, migration and war; young people develop identity confusion as such they are confused about themselves and their

preferences. The vulnerability of youths endear them to foreign ideals, as a result, the values and goals they are expected to uphold are reduced such that they prefer western ideas than traditional ones. However, the study revealed that television is the most impactful and memorable advertising medium. It plays an important role in young peoples' lives. Therefore television is the best tool for rebranding, reviving and inculcating cultural discipline on Nigerian youths to attain high level ethical standard.

In conclusion, the researchers advocate that mass media outlets in the country should turn towards the dissemination of information on indigenous products like foods, music, fashion and abandoned traditional festivities in their air waves bearing youths in mind; this will curb cultural extinction and achieve national cohesion among youths. Parents should support legislation that encourages not only responsible media use but indigenously cultural packed media programs. The youths should be educated and prepared in the right way to be patriotic in order to face the future of our countries heritage. Apart from the usual use of television to educate and entertain, it should be employed also as a channel of enhancing traditional values and not cultural alienation.

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