

New media and indigenous cultural identities in Nigeria

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Abstract

New media is a channel of mass communication mediated through internet-enabled computerised devices and dedicated applications/websites. Social media platforms and blogs are the prominent platforms of the new media and they continue to permeate the Nigerian society. The new media is a frontrunner in the actualisation of the 'global village' ideology; thus, it has notably influenced the construction and evolution of the way of life of social groups and their indigenous identities. This study is hinged on the cultivation theory, and sets out to examine the impact of new media on cultural identities in Nigeria. The study reviewed the meaning of culture, the dynamics of new media, digital culture and its catalysing effects on the Nigerian society. Primary data was generated through Focus Group Discussion which comprised 30 discussants from the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. Findings showed that the penetration of new media in Nigeria is high and that the platforms, such as blogs and social media applications, such as Facebook, Instagram, Telegram and Twitter have impacted on aspects of the Nigerian cultures, such as religion, education, family life and cultural values, favourably and otherwise. The study noted that new media should be embraced and positively engaged to promote the Nigerian cultures. The study recommended that deliberate and conscious efforts should be made by major cultural stakeholders, especially parents, entertainment industry and opinion leaders in the transmission of the Nigerian cultures to the younger generation. Finally, the Nigerian governments should also be consistent in their approaches to the promotion of culture, regardless of changes in administrations.

Key Words: Digital Culture, Culture Identity, New Media, Religion, Society

Introduction

Culture is a body of knowledge that regulates social relationships and that which members of any given society must understand and identify with to function adequately as a member. Culture is the totality of a group's expression, a historical process and a dynamic entity (Okpeh & Ugbegili, 2013). Culture is learned and transmitted from one generation to another through communication, this means that communications and its drivers play key roles in how culture is stepped down and promoted. The 21st century is one ruled by the internet and the new media/digital communication technologies. It is undeniably an era where the human factor in the information process has

reduced significantly, as channels of communication homogenize and standardise information in a dynamic way. New communication technologies birth a virtual universe where identities of people and social groups are modified through the projection of other cultural identities, such as new languages, mode of dressing, food, architecture, form of marriages and other ways of life.

New media is now part of human lives; hence it has a bearing on the human culture, both negatively and positively. Social media is the foremost new media platform; and Kerem (2016) contends that it has increased the connection

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between people and created a platform for sharing opinions. New media has penetrated into the Nigerian environment, most especially during and after the pandemic. Nigerians now rely on the platform for information, business, communication, and entertainment. This implies that there is a cultural shift from how things were, as popular culture is now perceived as the 'true culture'. Coteli (2018) and Singh (2010) corroborate this through the submission that new media is the root cause of the processes of cultural change and that technology changes public and private lives of individuals in every society.

New media is borderless, this means that what is published on a platform can go to unimaginable places. Cultures projected on new media platforms can cross national and continental boundaries, thus invading existing cultures. While there are desirable outcomes for this invasion, local cultures are getting a clapback as indigenous identities are losing their values and getting replaced with the pop culture, as portrayed in the new media. Tang & Chan (2020) posit that cultural values invaded through the new media may include human behaviours, beliefs, values or even fashion and lifestyle.

This study examines the new media and its impact on Nigerian cultures. The study reviews the meaning of culture, the dynamics of new media, digital culture and their catalysing effects on the Nigerian society. Through the focus group discussion, they x-ray key aspects of the Nigerian culture that the new media has impacted on, how it has done so and measures that can be taken to ensure that the Nigerian culture is protected and preserved. The study shall greatly enhance the existing body of work, with respect to new media and culture. It is equally believed that it shall serve as a hunch into further studies on the subject matter.

Research Objectives

1. To assess the influence of new media on cultural identities in Nigeria
2. To examine the digital media penetration and benefits to the Nigerian cultures.
3. To identify how cultural identities in Nigeria can be preserved in the new media era

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the cultivation theory of mass communication. The cultivation theory was conceptualised by George Gerber and Larry Gross in 1976. The theory is a media effect theory, and its assumption is that the broadcast medium, called 'television' influences the idea, beliefs and

assumptions of its viewers after long exposure. The argument is that the more someone watches television (heavy viewers), the greater the chance that such will be influenced by what is seen thereon, than someone who watches less (light viewers). The argument is fallible because people tend to model their way of life to what is being projected by the media.

Theory Blog (2022) avers that television contributes significantly to the way people perceive social reality. New media platforms are generally perceived as alternative platform to the old media, i.e., they potentially eat away the time people would have spent watching television. However, it is arguable that social media are encouraging viewership of media contents, which is primarily the function of the television. Patel & Slutsky (2011) agree that platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and other mobile platforms are luring people back to the screen. This study adopts the cultivation theory because new media is the hub where everything is happening today, as people listen to and watch all manner of media contents thereon. Consequently, ideologies, beliefs and assumptions are being altered to conform to what they have been exposed to, on the platforms.

Meaning and Contents of Culture

According to Pappas & McKelvie (2021), culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts. This agrees with the submission by an anthropologist by the name, Cristina De Rossi that - culture encompasses religion, food, what we wear, how we wear it, our language, marriage, music, what we believe is right or wrong, how we sit at the table, how we greet visitors, how we behave with loved ones and a million other things. In summary, culture represents a shared view of the world and shared values (Matthiesen-Jones, 2022).

Kluckhohn (1951, in Lebron, 2013) explains that culture consists of a patterned way of thinking, feeling and reaction, and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting majorly of human groups, including their embodiments of artifacts artefacts: the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically denied and selected) ideas and especially their attached values. The all-encompassing definition of Kluckhohn provides insight into what culture is about, some of which are: Culture is a patterned way of life; It has a means of transmission and expression; It constitutes the achievements of a particular human group; Culture is backed by history; It can take the form of ideas and values.

Culture refers to the set of values and beliefs learned overtime and shared with others, so that a sense of belonging can be achieved. The form that a culture takes in any place or era depends on what individuals of that time think, do/learn and produce at the moment; that is why Kessing (1974) commented that ‘culture must be thinkable, learnable and livable. Culture is a core element of a social system as it defines actions that are acceptable and how people within such system behave and interact with one another. Culture defers from society to society, thus implies that ‘one culture is not right, and the other is not wrong’. According to Lebron (2013), there are two indicators of culture: (i) Surface-level indicator which is related to similarity attraction and social identity (e.g. race, gender, disabilities, sexual orientation, economic status, religion and religious beliefs), and (ii) Deep-level indicator which is related to information processing within the system and personal value (e.g. loyalty, honesty, integrity and humility etc.).

Nnonyelu (2009) & Ogundele (2005) add that culture can be physical and non-material. The physical culture can be physical ingenious products, such as buildings, crafts, tools, food, dresses, pottery, works of arts, etc. The non-material culture includes all intangible and invisible aspects of a people’s way of life, such as folklore, kinship, music, dance, language and knowledge. The importance of culture is largely socio-economical. Some of which are: (a) Culture provides the feeling of safety and security to people. It ties people to their ancestry and provides a sensation of authenticity. (b) Products of culture are exportable and can create job opportunities. (c) Culture helps societies and nations to form an identity. (d) Culture improves thinking skills, self-esteem, and resilience, all of which enhance education outcomes. (e) Culture contributes to Tourism.

The Status and Dynamics of New Media in Nigeria

New media is the trending medium of mass communication. It is digital channels of information that allows for the creation and operation of a communication environment. Hennig-Thurau, Marchand & Max (2010) defines new media as websites and other digital communication and information channels through which active customers engage in behaviours that can be consumed by others both in real time and long afterwards, regardless of their spatial location. The new media practically enables endless interaction between and among people,

regardless of the distance and time between them. The prominent platforms of new media are social media and blogs. Mirchevska and Markova (2011) see social media as the media for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable communication techniques. They simply are web-based platforms and applications that turn communication into user-generated interactive dialogue between people who share a common field of experience. Social media platforms that are popular and at the same time very relevant to this discourse are Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and WhatsApp.

Blog is an abbreviation of the term ‘web blog,’ a concept coined by Jon Barger in 1997 (Blood, 2000). According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2017), blog is a website that contains online personal reflections, comments, and other hyperlinks, videos and photographs provided by the writer. Blogs are usually run by an individual or a small group; and entries published there in are arranged in a chronological order of time of publication, for easy access and location by blog visitors. Media resources, such as videos, images, texts, links to other blogs/websites (hypertext) can be published on blogs and require no prior technical knowledge to run (Bonus, Wright, Scheidt & Herrin, 2005). Blogs are also thriving in Nigeria; we have a good number that are influencing aspects of culture, such as fashion, style and food, like Bellanaija, Koko, Pulse Nigeria, Linda Ikeji Blog (LIB), FabWoman, Swagger and Bellanaija (Feedspot, 2022). The status of new media in Nigeria today can be attributed to Mobile Telecommunication Penetration, Internet Penetration and Social Media Adoption.

Mobile Telephony & Smartphone Adoption:

The launch of GSM in 2001 liberated Nigerians from the shackles of the once powerful, but now virtually insignificant, national telecoms monopoly-NITEL. This was because the Nigerian telecommunications received a great boost with the coming of the Global System for Communication (GSM) that year (Olaoluwa, 2019). Subsequently in 2003, the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) was set up and tasked with the facilitation of investments in and entry into the Nigerian market for provision and supply of communications services, equipment and facilities. Aside the conventional mobile phones, which were very popular at the beginning of the millennium, we now have smartphones - mobile phones that offer more advanced computing ability than a contemporary basic

phone (Litchfield, 2010). Igyuve, Akilla, Oriola & Agbele (2018) note that Smartphones are the electronic companions of people in the modern society, in that they perform multiple functions that mainly revolve around social communication, leisure, information processing and storage.

Osazee-Odia (2016) observes that the introduction of smartphones provided much relief for Nigerians, noting that its convergent nature in which all media forms have been built-in, from voice telephone, telegraph, print, radio, movies, television, internet and computerisation has richer

services to the users. Smartphones in Nigeria started with the Blackberry brand, followed by the Android phones and the iOS iPhone. Registration and engagements on new media platforms today in Nigeria are carried out more on these smartphones than computers (laptop, mini laptops and desktops). The number of active mobile sim cards in Nigeria gives a good idea of the number of mobile and smartphones that are with Nigerians. As of December 2021, there were 195,128,265 active mobile lines in Nigeria.

OPERATORS	Jun'21	Sep'21	Dec'21
MTN Nigeria Communication	73,571,192	73,566,926	73,594,682
Globacom Limited	50,130,540	52,934,990	54,817,353
Airtel	50,665,723	51,035,565	53,926,886
EMTS Limited	12,908,092	12,983,433	12,789,344
Sub-Total (GSM)	187,275,547	190,520,914	195,128,265

Source: Nigerian Communications Commission, 2021

Internet Penetration: Internet can be described as worldwide network of computers communicating via a mutual protocol. Ogungbeni, Adekanye, Bamgbose & Sulaiman (2016) avers that internet provides access to the most diversified source of information hosted by individuals and various organisations worldwide on a vast network of servers; and that its usage has increased tremendously over the last few years. Internet services predate the advent of GSM in Nigeria, as 38 internet service providers were licensed by the NCC in 1996, though only Linkserve began commercial operations in 1997 (Vanguard Newspaper, October 2010). The likes of Spectranet, Cobranet, Ipnx, Layer3, Swift, Smile and Tizeti are ISPs, currently thriving and providing services in Nigeria today (Monzon, 2021).

The introduction and increased adoption of smartphones in Nigeria has changed the narrative for internet penetration in the country because compared to the existing internet service providers which were hitherto connected to desktop computers, the smartphones became the 'computer,' owing to its beyond-traditional functionalities. Smartphones are enabled for internet functionality; hence users can browse, chat, be live on social media and do voice/video calls on the device. Internet connectivity is enabled through the sim card in the device or through

external ISPs. The data from NCC (2021) shows that 229,248 Voice-over Internet calls were made as at December 2021. These calls comprise the Facebook calls, WhatsApp calls, Skype calls, Microsoft Teams calls and the likes. As of July 2021, there were more than 108 million internet users in Nigeria (Statistica, 2021). In addition, Lancaster (2019) explains that through the national internet fibre backbone networks, platforms such as e-commerce, online banking and e-payments, e-health, e-learning and e-government are evolving rapidly. Internet is the largest technology market in Nigeria today, and has made the country an active tech hub. Its penetration in Nigeria continues to open new doors for labor force, entrepreneurship and employment.

Social Media Penetration: Social media platforms are web-based sites or applications that allow for social interaction. Manning (2014) defines social media as the new forms of media, other than the broadcast and the print that involve interactive participation. Social media is a known term in Nigeria today, owing to the popularity of platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Twitter. O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson (2011) add that gaming sites and virtual worlds, such as Club Penguin, Second Life and the Sims; video sites, such as YouTube and blogs are also examples of social media. Engagement in

various forms of social media is a routine activity for Nigerians, especially youths, as it enhances communication, social connection and even technical skills. Social media has driven social movements, brought to the fore issues, otherwise played down and given a voice to the people.

In 2020, Busola Dakolo, wife of the popular singer, Timi Dakolo granted an interview where she narrated how she was raped by the lead Pastor of Commonwealth of Zion Assembly (COZA), Pastor Biodun Fatoyinbo when she was just 16 years (Augoye, 2020). Although the case came to the fore in June, 2019, the allegation went viral on social media with the hashtag #MeToo. At the release of the interview on the social media, there was an unprecedented revolution. Many youths who had lost their voices as victims of rape were able to come up to tell their stories. A formidable coalition was formed which led to massive protests at the Lagos and Abuja parish of the Church. Petersen (2019) adds that many businesses now effectively use social media to promote their products and connect with customers. The covid lockdown also made Nigerians more reliant on social media platforms for communication with family and friends. Social media also helped facilitate learning and connection to places of worship during the pandemic.

Digital Culture and New Media as a Neo-Colonisation Weapon

Digital culture is a concept shaped by the evolution and adoption of digital technologies. It refers to the way of life of people who are in the online media space. Poepsel (2018) defines the concept as the knowledge, beliefs and practices of a people's interaction on digital networks that may recreate a tangible culture or create new strains of cultural thought and practices native to digital networks. Digital technologies are chief mediators in human interactions; this has opened up the opportunity for the platform to shape how humans interact and act in today's environment. Spacy (2021) notes that cultures termed as 'digital' emerged through the process of sharing experiences in digital environments. The thrust of digital culture (just like the common culture) is that everyone in the digital environment behaves in the same way.

Some of the popular digital cultures in Nigeria today are social media presence, surveillance of people by organisations and individuals, virtual gaming, working remotely, e-learning, smartphone use, online communities, internet memes, collaborative art, online purchases, mass mobilisation, online dating etc.

Everyone has become entwined with the internet and digital technologies. Furedi (2017) cites the example of the flourishing online dating which has provided solutions thrown up by a more individuated and segmented social setting. Additionally, the culture of buying things online is a popular culture today, and more unique vendors are getting onto the new media platforms to provide more options to members.

While the digital culture is admirable, scholars have expressed concerns about the fallouts. Family, friendship and peer-to-peer interactions are increasingly now mediated by the digital platforms, hence, now virtual. Furedi (2017) believes this digital culture has consequences as online mediated communication has influenced the evolution of language and identity of the people. The 'need' to have visibility has also pushed people to share all their lives on the social media platform, even when inappropriate and inconvenient. That digital culture enables media plurality is good but it may not be good news for everyone. Multiple problems emerge from the change. First, many blog posts are still opinion-oriented, rather than first-coverage news oriented, meaning, most blogs don't offer journalistically reported news content. Also, the emergence of bloggers means news media organisations now face much more competition (Harper, 2010). One aspect of the digital culture and change is how it affects the communal nature of Nigerians. Formally the neighborhood was a place where children could be seen running around and playing together in the sand, under the rain with made-up games. The advent of mobile smart phones and the internet has moved from communal to virtual. According to NCC, the telecoms operator MTN, in 2020, came up with a product (Teen Value Proposition) that offers teenagers access to games and education-related services at a price ranging from N10-N300. This means with as low as N10, the access to a variety of games is sure.

The influence of digital technologies has equally birthed arguments and counterarguments that the new media is a weapon of westernisation and introduction of alien practices. Beginning with the evolution of the 'Iwe Iroyin' of 1859 by Rev. Henry Townsend, the newspaper, though in vernacular, was widely believed to have the intention of influencing the traditional government met by the British missionaries in Egba. Simon and Ndoma (2016) in the same vein, also contend that Nigeria's cultures, and by extension Africa, with all their embodiments are polluted and westernised by our mass media. Alimi (2005)

corroborated the position of Simon and Ndoma (2016) in his submission is that the communication channels in Nigeria today are successfully imposing alien values, alien faiths and alien psychology on our cultures.

The new media is rife with contents and cultures that are from foreign climes, cultures such as divorce, drunkenness, lewd songs and promotion of wealth with unknown sources. These cultures are acceptable in Nigeria today, especially among youths and tend to justify arguments that the new media is being subtly engaged to override indigenous cultures. Today, local Nigerian languages are being pushed to the background as 'English' language is the general language of communication on new media platforms. Most elites and common parents prefer to converse with their children in English. Robert and Besong (2016) add that it is now common to see a Nigerian in suit on a hot day. This is definitely not a Nigerian way of life or attire but what has been projected on the new media and adopted by Nigerian media users.

Other scholars simply believe that the new media is only a communication channel created to benefit everyone. Narasimhamurthy (2014) says the new media is simply a linkage platform which makes it relatively easier to communicate with people and be exposed to their way of life. Through the new media, the Nigerian cultural identities, especially in the area of arts, dance, music, beats and drama have been successfully exported to other nations where they have been adopted. Kerem (2016), using the social media as an example, notes that the platforms have only simply increased the connection between people and created an environment for sharing opinion (marketplace of ideas). This implies that the platforms of new media play the role of the connector universally, to every user (as individuals and nations).

Protecting and Promoting Nigerian Cultures in the Digital Era

The protection and promotion of the Nigerian cultures in the digital era rest upon different stakeholders, such as the government, non-state actors, private individuals, social institution and researchers. The governments at the local, state and federal levels have the onerous task of ensuring that the Nigerian cultures survive in this new media era. Alegbeleye (2017) adds that the issue of preservation of Nigerian cultural heritage is a national issue and should attract national and concerted efforts from government at all levels. The governments have the authority and the most

resources to make things happen, with respect to Nigerian cultures' preservation. Government ministries, such as the Federal Ministry of Arts and Culture, and agencies like the Commission for Museums and Monuments have before now been plagued and stalled by challenges ranging from how subventions/funding from government to carry out their statutory responsibilities (Onyima, 2016) should be rightly supported by the government, so they can perform dutifully. Kurin (2007) contends that organisations most appropriate to take the lead role in safeguarding cultural heritage, collection and preservation is the museum, hence, the need for adequate funding.

In addition, the governments have a huge role to play in the review and implementation of the existing national policy (first formulated in 1976). There is equally the argument of funding events that promote the Nigerian cultures by the governments, well-meaning individuals and organisations. A good reason for the sponsoring and promoting of the Nigerian cultures and cultural identities is that the nation stands to benefit, owing to the capacity of culture to boost the country through tourism and exportation. Another method to safeguarding of cultural heritage, especially artefacts proposed by scholars and researchers in the field of culture, such as Mosesti (2016), Gabriela (2017) & Kareka & Mudhol (2014) is the digitalisation of cultural heritages. Koiki-Owoyele, Alabi & Egbunnu define the digitalisation process as the photography, scanning of cultural items and transferring them to the computer, so people can view them digitally. They note that this approach lessens the wear and tear of the original material, because it gives a replica to distribute. Also, this documentation approach provides solution to decays, war, fire, flood and continued availability of such to the coming generation.

The fact that the task of promoting and preserving the Nigerian cultures in the digital era equally lie with social institutions, such as family/marriage, schools, religious institutions cannot be overemphasised. Ideally, these institutions have more contacts with natives of the country in their different localities and ethnic groups, and this affords them the opportunity to model and advocate cultural values, such as respect, chastity, integrity, morality and hardwork. Onyima (2016) averses that parents should not neglect their responsibility of inculcating the right values into their children from the family, through right parenting. Academic researchers equally have a role to play in the presentation and promotion of Nigerian cultures through studies

into culture and its impact on the global identity of Nigeria.

Method of Study

This study adopts the qualitative research approach. The study was domiciled in Nigeria and data was generated using primary and secondary sources of data. Under the conceptual framework section, concepts were critically reviewed via consultations with academic papers and published print materials (online and hardcopy) peculiar to the discourse. Using the purposive sampling technique, 30 discussants (identified as respondent 1 to 30) were selected for focus group discussion on the subject matter.

The respondents were drawn from 16 states in Nigeria, which had a representation of the six

geo-political zones in Nigeria. Each geo-political zone is unique, and all states from each, share similar cultures, hence, the intentionality of having respondents who represented views of all the geo-political zones in Nigeria. The 30 respondents were extracted from designated academic and corporate social media groups, where the call for participation in the focus group discussions on the research topic were made. The 30 discussants were divided into six groups of 5 discussants and the focus group discussion held between the 28th of January to the 2nd of February, 2022, on the Zoom App. Discussions were transcribed and narratively analysed, while the demographic distribution of the respondents was manually tabulated in a frequency distribution table.

Results and Analysis

Table 1: Distribution of Discussants by Age and Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	17	56.67
Female	13	43.33
Total	30	100
Age	Frequency	Percentage %
20-25	6	20
26-30	8	26.67
31-35	7	23.33
36-40	7	23.33
40 & above	2	6.66
Total	30	100
Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Education/Academic	7	23.33
Business/Entrepreneur	6	20
Media & Comm.	5	16.66
Medicine	1	3.33
Student	11	36.66
Total	30	100
Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
BSc/B.Ed.	21	70
MSc/M. A	3	10
PhD	1	3.33
Total	30	100

Table 1 indicates that 17 participants representing 56.67% were male, while 13, representing 33.33% were female. The table equally indicates that people between the ages of 26-30 were more than other age brackets among the participants. This was followed by the 31-35 and 36-40 age bracket and the 20-25 age bracket. The least was the 40 and above age bracket. Also from the table, the

participants were made up of professionals in the academic, business/ entrepreneurship, media/communication practice, and medicine. The Table also indicates that 21 of the discussants, representing 70% were bachelor's degree holders, 5 participants representing 10% were master's degree holders, while 1 participant representing 3.33% was a doctorate degree holder.

Table 2: Distribution of Discussants by State of Origin

State of Origin	Frequency	Percentage %
Ondo	2	6.66
Ogun	4	13.32
Kwara	2	6.66
Gombe	1	3.33
Osun	3	10
Rivers	2	6.66
Edo	1	3.33
Delta	2	6.66
Taraba	1	3.33
Kaduna	1	3.33
Akwa Ibom	1	3.33
Ebonyi	2	6.66
Imo	2	6.66
Kano	2	6.66
FCT	2	6.66
Kogi	2	6.66
Total	30	100

Table 2 indicates that the states of origin of the focus-group participants cut across Ondo, Ogun, Kwara, Gombe, Osun, Rivers, Edo, Delta, Taraba, Kaduna, Akwa Ibom, Ebonyi, Imo, Kano, FCT and Kogi. These show the representation of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. From the audience profiling, the South-West, North-Central and South-South of Nigeria had a representation of three states, respectively, while the North-East, North-West and South-East of Nigeria had a representation of two states.

Meaning of Culture and Cultural Identities in Nigeria

All the discussants agreed on what culture is; they demonstrated conversance with the concept of culture as the 'way of life' of a people. R-3 simply explained culture as what makes a people unique. 10 discussants, equaling 33.33% mentioned some identities that make up the Nigerian cultures; items mentioned were drumbeats, dance, food, dress and religion. (R12) listed Christianity, Islam and traditional worship, facial markings, music, respect for elders, clothing, accent, hardwork, dignity, language and education.

New Media Penetration in Nigeria

Discussants believed that the penetration of the new media platforms is high, compared to the last 10years. R5 noted that the covid-19 has actually played a huge role in the penetration in Nigeria in the last two years. People now rely on the digital

technologies to do almost everything, hence, the increased penetration of the new media, especially in the area of communication during the pandemic lockdown. To R10, the penetration of new media in Nigeria is evidently high and can be attributed to the reliance of Nigerians on the new media for news and other information. Other reasons for the penetration of new media in Nigeria are access and relative affordability of technological devices in Nigeria today. There is also the need for communication between those in the cities and the hinterlands (R17)

Common New Media Platforms

Common examples of new media mentioned by the discussants are social media platforms, such as Facebook, SnapChat, Instagram, Telegram, WhatsApp, Tiktok. Blog was also mentioned as platform of the new media

Influence of New Media on Religion and Religious Practices

Discussants said that the new media has greatly influenced religion and how it is practiced in Nigeria today. New media has broken the idea that God is bound by the confinement of the Church building. New media has in a way brought God closer to the people and people are now deeper in God due to access to a lot of messages online. R23 added that new media has added the dimension of typing 'spoken tongues' during online prayers is a new dimension to religion, as it was not happening before.

“The new media has opened up online religion to the world. The herbalists now have online platforms where they can reach and add people to their religion. The likes of ‘indaboshki’ are also carving for themselves and their Churches a niche in the online space” (R18).

While the new media has helped religion in some ways, it has equally taken some people farther away from God, owing to exposure to false doctrines online. All discussants also believe that the new media also constitutes a form of distraction as evidenced in places of worship today; someone who is in church listening to sermon is at the same time chatting with someone who is far away. Conversely, the new media has opened up Nigerians to influx of foreign preachers and Churches, hence, Nigerians are influenced by how they dress to Church and how they worship God (R14). Finally, the new media has provided the opportunity for people to ‘call out’ and question religious leaders in the online space. This was not the practice in the past, as religious leaders were deemed to be ‘gods’ who must not be questioned.

New Media and Education Today

New media has made e-learning possible, according to majority of the discussants. R6 added that the new media has boosted the creative skills of students and has made learning more interesting. R11 equally added that students now have access to resource materials, thanks to the online media. R8 negated the position of R11, and submitted that education is no more interesting as it used to be, as students do not really engage their mental faculties like in the past. R8 added that in the past, students wrote and transferred notes, hence, there was more likelihood to read and understand, compared to the electronic form of learning that is now available.

R7 was quite dynamic in his assessment of the question item. His submission was that the new media has brought about a cultural shift in the inclusion of the female gender in formal education settings, especially in the northern part of Nigeria, where a lesser percentage of female students are in school or participate actively in class activities. Citing the FGD held on Zoom, R12 added that the new media has also aided research. Questionnaires can be administered easily.

Cultural Values in the New Media Era

Majority of the discussants believed that the new media has had negative impact on cultural values in Nigeria, which were the guiding lights in the past. R21 identified the rise in new ritualism in recent times in Nigeria, which can be attributed to materialism, bandwagon effect, portrayal of affluence and wealth on the social media. The discussant also ascribed to the issues of internet fraud and cultism in Nigeria today. The discussant noted that this is against the cultural value of dignity and hardwork that obtained in the past. Another discussant gave the example of deliberate leakage of sexual tapes into the online media for trending purposes. Nudity is another culture that the new media has contributed to, in recent times, as Nigerian ladies are more and more convenient with the idea of exposing their bodies, as obtains in the western cultures. R30 simply added that the new media has made way for good numbers of ‘hardworking’ youths who have maintained such value and have leveraged on the new media platform to sell their ideas and connect with people all around the world.

Impact of New Media on Marriage and Family Life

Discussants were very opinionated about the impact of the new media on marriage. R24, for example, noted that the new media has enhanced the ‘feminist movement’ and the ‘equal right’ culture, which was not the Nigerian culture in the past. Women, having seen how things work in other climes through platforms of the new media, see themselves as active players in marriages, just like the men. This has led to advocacy for equal rights for both genders, unlike in the old culture where the ‘man’ is everything in the marriage, and other spheres of life. Another discussant (R10), added there are now no more issues of distance or communication barrier between couples, as they are able to communicate using new media platforms. Another discussant added that new media security applications, such as FindMe and Google location sharing have helped couples to know where their partners are.

“The new media has bridged the cultural gap, as wives now call their husbands ‘baby’, ‘honey’, as it applies in the western world. Equally, family responsibilities are now shared between husbands and wives in the family, in the new media era. Stuffs like school runs and financing of responsibilities are now a duty of both partners” (R26).

R30 surmised that new media has a negative effect on marriages, as it has made couples far apart, even when they are together. Couples do not seem to bond, have physical connections and discussions, as they chat away with people who may be far away. This position was echoed by R11 who said there is now divided attention among married couples because of the new media. According to R1, new media has increased the rate of infidelity in marriages, owing to the possibility of boundless interaction and concealing conversations through device password. There is also the issue of lesser marital satisfaction, anxiety and depression based on comparison of life, as portrayed on social media, which is not the reality. Others noted that the high rate of divorces can also be attributed to the penetration of new media. Divorce, which is not a Nigerian culture is now a celebrity culture because it is projected and celebrated in the new media. Children in some Nigerian families are already exposed to wrong contents today because of the new media. In the new media, there are negative and positive influencers on the children.

Perception of ‘Digital Culture’ in Nigeria

A large percentage of the discussants believed that the digital culture, a culture shaped by the emergence and adoption of digital technologies has positive influence on the Nigeria society and culture. In the comments of R13, digital culture provided the opportunity for multi-tasking which was not possible before now. R6 equally added that we now have digital libraries and online classes, as a result of digital platforms, while digital culture has increased connection e.g. the LinkedIn platform which connects professionals and affords people the opportunity to work remotely, share opinions/business ideas in the digital space. R11 commented that digital culture has afforded Nigerians the opportunity to air their thoughts expressively. Digital culture cannot replace physical meeting, citing examples of physical science practical (R26). The penetration of digital technologies in Nigeria has made it possible for Nigerians to work remotely. R12 added that through the new media, political parties and individuals can push propaganda and ideologies.

Super Imposition of Imported Cultures through the New Media.

R12 posited that digital culture in Nigeria is a two-way transaction and not a form of super imposition of the western culture at the expense of our culture. As a result of the existing new media

platforms, foreigners are getting to know more about the Nigerian culture. The truth is that we are losing some of our culture and adopting their cultures, while people from there are equally losing some aspects of their culture, and adopting the Nigerian cultures.

“The new media is ‘amoral’, it only becomes to us what we make of it, hence, it is not a medium to subvert the Nigerian culture, while projecting the western culture. There are no ulterior motives behind the introduction of new media, Nigerians have always had the belief that anything imported is better than the home made, which is actually not the reality” (R19).

R6 opined that new media is a disaster, as it has made the imported cultures more powerful than indigenous local cultures, hence, there could be a reason to believe the notion that new media is playing out the role of executioner of the Nigerian culture. Some members of the discussants believe that new media has only made the Nigerian culture more popular, so there is no ulterior motive for its creation.

Protecting the Nigerian Culture

All discussants are of the opinion that the Nigerian culture identities can be protected in the new media era. R22 noted that the first thing to do is to identify with and embrace our culture. The discussant added that a good way to do this is to include an element of the Nigerian culture in music, education, drawings etc. in every product and content that are being projected on the online media. R11 and R12 agreed that the new media is here to stay, hence, Nigerians must embrace it, project our indigenous contents and values, and reject bad cultures from the western world. In addition, R30 commented that platforms, such as Nollywood, schools and religious places are good platforms that can be used to promote the importance of the Nigerian culture, so that it can be protected and preserved.

“Nigeria needs a cultural road map. If I may ask, what do we stand for and where are we going as a nation? The government of Nigeria needs to be consistent, regardless of the administration, with respect to where we are headed and the place of our culture in the movement. We need a national cultural policy document” (R24)

“The Nigerian system needs to be fixed, this will make our cultures attractive and people will want to identify with, and project them. Nigerians also need to change the mentality of ‘imported is better’. The protection of the Nigerian cultures is everybody’s work” (R9).

Parents and family have a huge role in the protection of the Nigerian culture. The parents should model the Nigerian culture to the coming generation. They should consistently communicate local dialects and cultural values to the children. They should expose children to traditional festivities.

Discussion

This study sets out to achieve three objectives which revolve around the impact of new media platforms on cultural identities in Nigeria, digital media penetration and benefits to the Nigerian cultures and preservation of indigenous Nigerian cultures in the new media era. For objective 1, findings show that cultural identities are unmistakable as they are items that sets a people apart from others. Unique Nigerian cultures identified by the study are drumbeats, dance, food, dress, religion, facial markings, music, respect for elders, clothing, accent, language and education. This is in tandem with the position of Lebron (2013) and Ekeanyanwu (2015) who note that culture is based on languages, religion, customs and values such as respect, hardwork and resourcefulness. It was also discovered that the likes of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, TikTok, Snapchat & Blogs have broken confinement barriers of having a relationship with God within the four walls of a religious building, as there are now online Churches. R18 summed this up by the statement: ‘New media has opened up online religion to the world’.

Nigerians, especially Christians and Muslims now have access to more religious resources (online messages and books) available to them. There is now a promotional platform for every form of religion, be it Christianity, Islam or traditional worship. There are also new idiosyncrasies, such as speaking in tongues during online prayer forums (R23). On the new media platforms, there are also proliferation of false doctrines, evident distractions when people are in places of worship, exposure to and adoption of western worship practices and mode of dressing to Churches. Nigerians now ‘call out’ and question religious leaders in the online space – a practice not contemplated in the past. The above findings

are corroborated by Matsuura (2019), who submits that sharing of information through online social platforms expose people to a plethora of religious beliefs, ideas and practices. In the same vein, Stokel-Walker (2017) identified that, faiths are adopting online technologies to make it easier for people to communicate ideas and worship.

New media has made e-learning possible and has boosted the creative skills of students (R8). This view is supported by Uduodo & Ojo (2016) who surmised that the new media gives room to creativity and widen learning horizon, thus, bringing the world closer to the learner, faster. There was a divergent view by R11 who submitted that education is no more interesting as it used to be, as students do not really engage their mental faculties like in the past. New media has also facilitated a cultural shift in the inclusion of the female gender in formal education settings, especially in the northern part of Nigeria. Cultural values, marriage and family values are aspects of the Nigerian culture impacted upon by the new media. Findings revealed that new media largely has a negative impact on cultural values in Nigeria that were cherished in the past, as materialism, affluence, wealth, internet fraud and cultism are now issues of concern in Nigeria. Cultural value like dignity, chastity and hardwork are relegated to the background. This agrees with Kappuswamy & Shankar (2010) who explained that the social networks grab the attention and concentration of people and divert them toward unethical and inappropriate actions.

Finally on objective one, with regards to marriage and family life, new media has enhanced the ‘feminist movement’ and the ‘equal right’ culture, which was hitherto not a Nigerian culture. Nigerian women are now active players in marriages, business and other spheres of life, just like the men. New media has equally broken the issue of distance and communication barrier between Nigerian couples. Security has also helped solve security and location challenges in the family; thanks to dedicated applications. Cultural gaps in marriage and relationships have also been bridged by the new media.

“The new media has bridged the cultural gap as wives now call their husbands ‘baby’, ‘honey’, as it applies in the western world. Equally, family responsibilities are now shared between husbands and wives in the family in the new media era. Stuffs like school runs and financing of responsibilities are now a duty of both partners” (R26).

The above explains how culture is redefining marriage in Nigeria. Conversely, new media has birthed issues that are not Nigerian in nature, issues such as divorce, baby mama, single father, social disconnect, lack of bonding in families, owing to time spent online, exposure of children to wrong contents, increased rate of infidelity in marriages, lesser marital satisfaction, anxiety and depression based on comparison with life, as portrayed on social media and negative attitudes, owing to wrong social media influence.

Findings of objective two reveal that digital media penetration is high and its attendant benefits to Nigerian cultures are two-sided. Compared to the last 10 years, new media has intensely penetrated the Nigerian society. The pandemic lockdown played a huge role in this, in the last two years. Digital technologies are relied upon heavily for news, business and communication needs. This discovery is supported by the view of Verhoef, et al. (2021) that consumers strongly rely on AI-based technologies, business and information app and websites. Digital culture is also the new culture in Nigeria, as it provides the opportunity for multi-tasking, having online classes and libraries. Digital culture has increased professional connection and afforded people the opportunity to work remotely. A divergent discovery concerning objective two is that digital culture cannot replace physical meetings, such as science practical and family bonding. In support of the preceding discovery, Furedi (2017) believes that digital culture has consequences on language and the identity of people. Digital culture also affords people and political parties the opportunity to push propaganda easily. This study supports the idea of the impact of the new media being two-sided. Findings revealed that digital culture is a two-way transaction, and every user of new media platform gets to experience cultures from different places, and they are able to adopt or reject, as they deem fit.

For objective three, the study discovered that the Nigerian culture identities can be protected in the new media era. This protection starts with identification, embracing and inclusion of elements of the Nigerian culture in the products emanating from Nigeria, either tangible or intangible. Rich Nigerian cultural identities should be projected, while negative imported cultures should be rejected. Entities, such as the government, parents/family, schools, and religious places; and art industry, such as the Nollywood, also have a role to play in the protection of Nigerian culture. R9 noted that Nigerians need to

change the mentality of 'imported is better', so that the good in the Nigerian culture can be seen.

Conclusion

New media platforms have undeniable impacts on the Nigerian culture and cultural identities, as drawn from this study. Aspects of the Nigerian culture that have been impacted upon by the new media, as examined through this study are family life, marriage, education, religion, and religious practices. These cultures are expressed in new ways today; some are deemed as unNigerian and negative. Nigerian cultural values, such as hardwork, dignity, chastity, and respect are noted to have been negatively impacted on, by the new media era, especially in the lives of youths, who are prominent users of the new media and adopters of the popular cultures. The cultivation theory also obviously plays in the Nigeria society today because new media is the hub of communication and almost everything that people do now, are mediated by platforms of this digital media technologies, hence the digital culture. Owing to continued exposure and engagement of the new media platforms, ideologies, beliefs and assumptions that make Nigerians Nigerian, are being altered to conform to what is being projected across the platforms. While some of the influences of the new media on Nigerian culture and cultural identities are desirable, some of the negative influences of the new media on the Nigerian culture, as exposed by this study requires attention. To this end, social institutions/industries that are key players in matters of culture, family, religion, education, entertainment and government have a task on their hands of ensuring that bad culture from other lands are rejected, while indigenous cultures of Nigeria are promoted in the same space, so that the Nigerian cultures are protected.

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