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Analysis Of Traditional Media And Social Media Interface: Bridging Rural/Urban And Global Digital Divides

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the emergence of social media in the Nigeria dominated traditional media space and critically analyses the clear impact the new media technology has created in information dissemination. To achieve the objectives of the study, the researchers used observational research method, combining both participant and non-participant research approach. Such method afforded them the opportunity to notice the change of event in reporting both rural and urban news. They discovered that the new media totally eliminated the bottleneck problems encountered by reporters using traditional approach system. The study concludes that social media have truly bridged the gap often encountered by journalists using traditional media approach in reporting rural, urban and global news events. Therefore, among other things, the study recommends that serious studies could be carried out to further strengthen the collaboration between traditional and social media interface in their news reportage.

Introduction

Traditional media are those means of communication that are peculiar to typical African societies. They also refer to those modes of communication still used today by rural dwellers and often used also in urban areas. According to Nwosu, (2003) this is “the first type of media that were used by the indigenous Nigerians before the colonial adventures got to the shores of Nigeria”. Ekwelie and Okonkwo cited by Nwabueze (2004) observe that these media have survived from the earliest of times and made an adjusted transition into electronic age. They have also undergone changes but still retaining their mode and significance.

Described as Oramedia by Ugboajah (1985) and systematically classified from idiophones, symbology to acrophones, membranophones and others by Wilson (1987), Nwosu continues, “the beauty of these traditional media lie in the fact that they have survived even up to this day and are still waxing strong as indispensable media of communication in the rural areas where more than 75% of Nigerians still live”.

The Professor maintains that the strength of traditional media lies in the fact that their users consider them more credible than modern mass media; and again, they are cheap, easily available, accessible and easy to understand.

Communication scholars researching in this area have found that the traditional media structures make it possible for the packaged and transferred in locally popular artistic forms. These media have no rival by any other means of communication with regard to reaching the ruralities. This observation was shared with Mac Bride *et al.* (1960) when they stated that these media maintain their validity, particularly when used to influence attitudes, instigate action and promote change. Oramedia are grounded on indigenous culture produced and consumed by members of a group, and are used to reinforce the value orientation of the group. Traditional media take on many forms and are rich in symbolism.

Some of their forms are folk theatre, talking drums, flutes, traditional dances, gongs, town crier, village squares, market places, local churches and mosques, masquerades, extra-mundane modes like spirits and gods, traditional sports and festivals, moon light plays, marriages, use of days, farming and cropping season, crafts, sculptures etc. Equally, traditional media can be divided into several categories: interpersonal or fact-to-face, inter-group and mass, and employ the use of both verbal and non-verbal mode of communication.

Media development has grown from traditional media of communication to the print media of communication, then to broadcast (electronic) media and the new information and communication technology (ICT) like the internet, websites, global satellite for mobile communication (GSM) phones and others (Nwosu, 2003). The emergence of the internet and related technologies has forced a reconsideration of media policy, use and operation. Communication and information technologies related industries are today at the very heart of investment and growth in the world economy, and this explains the reasons why analysis of global capitalism needs to be at the centre of any study of communication systems in the future. With the digitalization and computerization of our society as a result of information revolution, observed (Deitch 1994, Stoll, 1995) cited by McChesney (1997), the next question would be, what will be the social, cultural and political consequences of these new communication and information technologies?"

It has become obvious that traditional media is Suffering because today people browse the internet and get virtually all information in any field of their interest, even with the people in urban/rural setting. Not only in computer and internet has this revolution taken place drastically, in broadcasting too. With digital technology, which has Visibly transformed radio and television, you can call up hundreds of channels on TV in an instant, and can pause and rewind the broadcasts and record every episode of your favorite programme using a personal video recorder (PVR). With the latest digital radio receiver, you can pause, rewind programme guide and tuned recording functions.

Also, some digital satellite receivers offer pause, rewind and recording features, as well as access to dozens of channels. Digital broadcasting is fast displacing analogue broadcast. Now, digital radio can be delivered via internet, in the form of audio streaming.

The rapidly ICT development is widening the gap between traditional media and modern media (ICT media). And seriously affecting the concept of communication which provides interface that ensures regular functional relationship between the subsystems in the world media system. This study therefore seeks to find out the approach(es) to be taken to abridge these rural/urban global digital communication divides in line with this search. The study will carefully observe interface of traditional media and digital (ICTS) media, using the structural- functionalism paradigm construct.

Problem and Aim of Study

Quoting Anim (2003) cited in Nwabueze (2004), “the rural communities of the world more particularly of the developing world, are being systematically excluded from the flow of national communication by the unresponsiveness of the modern media of communication to their needs. They are being forced to retreat further and further into the refuse of what they can cope with, what they can relate with, and what they can understand: the traditional modes of communication. The increasingly sophisticated modern media are thus, in the process playing a dysfunctional role”.

This fear expressed by Anim, forms the problem of this study observing that increasingly on daily basis, youths, especially in Enugu State, in both rural and urban settlements, pay more attention to ICT - mediated information than traditional- mediated information, for their information needs. The attention have shifted from analogue broadcast devices to modern digital media which are gradually replacing the old order with its attendant problems. Digital broadcast media, experts observed, offer the users improved quality and choice, and even allow the stations to broadcast multiple streams.

Notwithstanding all these fables and fantasies of the digital media, scholars like Nwuneli (1985), Rogers

and Shoemaker (1971) and Nwosu (2004) still hold that traditional media (face-to-face) Communication is consistently effective as a persuasive device than any mass medium; are of greater importance than mass media in diffusion of innovations and are more credible than the modern mass media. These credits shall also be investigated in this work, and if found true, how then do our youths and even adults pay more attention to the global digital media for their information needs.

Theoretical Framework: Analytical Approach

In order to place this analysis properly, we shall discuss the topic based on the structural functionalism construct in sociology. The construct postulated by Parsons, 1947: Morton, 1957, emphasize the need for us to understand the structure of ideas and communications dominant in any community, if we are to understand that community; its other structures, cultures, problems and issues. According to them, the structure of ideas and patterns of communication in any community have direct positive correlation with what actually happens in the community.

The dyachronic analytical approach of the structural – functional paradigm (Nwosu, 2001) accommodates dynamic changes over time in forms, and nature of community or society structures, and their Communication information needs.

In fact, the implications as well as the applications of these functions In analyzing traditional and ICTS media interface is ideal. It offers a clear picture of boundary between the two media structures, and guides observers in trying to contribute toward the analysis of these two extreme media structures, and how to abridge rural/urban and global digital divides.

According to Chukwu (2016:116), “both the traditional and the modern communication methods should be for effective information dissemination. There is nothing wrong in retaining the town crier, the crowing of the cock, or the conveying of the village meetings...combining the radio and the town crier, for instance, achieves more than use either of them alone”.

The author further observed that “a combined use of the interpersonal communication and the modern media leads to very interesting socio-cultural results”. In fact, the obvious idea of using one medium to Complement another, or using one medium to support the other, or even reinforce one with another is very necessary for effective integrated rural development.

Nwodu and Nwammuo (2006:131) quoting Nkala (1990) state that the structure of the traditional society manifests itself through the people’s political and social organization, which serve as the conduit, or channel through which Our forefathers managed their affairs successfully down to ages, not without conflicts, but in spite of them. Therefore, the authors, observed: the contents of trado media communication are embedded in the channels through which communication is made possible in the rural areas”.

Methodology

Observational study method was used in this study, combining both participant and non-participant approaches. Summers *et al.* (1995) cited in Nwodu (2005) say that “observation means the process of watching something or someone carefully for a period of time”. In the Abakpa Nike and Ogui Urban settlements of Enugu State where this researchers carried out their observation spanning between 2013 and 2025, ICTS media have deflected the psyche and media orientation of our people.

Discussion of Findings

Both the elites and those expected to champion traditional modes of communication have lost their bearings and are swallowed by ICTS media-computer, internet and satellite TV channels. Computer browsing centers now host more youths than any local festivals in the village; and satellite cable television sets today count for economic status and literacy level of the users, as every home in these two areas where the observation was carried out strive to be connected to digital cable television, whether the users understand what they watch or not, that remains meaningless.

Atimes, the long stay at computer (internet) browsing for information and watching foreign programmes and news via digital cable television make us wonder how can the interface between the traditional media of communication, ICTs media of communication and digital media of communication can be abridged to ensure inter-relationship among their users.

As rightly observed, Nwosu (2006:19) noted that the problem of communication and mass media development in Africa is due to the inability of Africa's media to work freely and meaningfully towards the overall media development. African countries still mostly have to depend largely on the major world news agencies and media network in the developed countries (e.g. the CNN) for whatever news and opinion about them that get to the outside world. They still have to depend mostly on these developed countries' advanced media technology and news outlets for whatever images of them that are presented to the world at large.

Although, notwithstanding these setbacks, the authors still observe that "in the present ICTS revolution age the situations have again improved significantly for the better". With this positive developments, the inhibiting problems will definitely be overcome for the thorough marriage of trado-modern media use in Africa, for the overall African development communication.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has shown that there exist wide interface between the traditional media and ICTs media and such gap is made possible due largely to global digital media rapidly developing. Although, the study equally has established that traditional media of communication have Some attendant advantages over modern means of communication, but youths and adults alike prefer to be exposed to ICTs media channels. Again, the study supports the observation made by Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) that interpersonal channels are of greater importance than mass media channels in diffusion of innovations less developed nations, but the emergence of Global System of Mobile (GSM) Communication which is “machine-assisted interpersonal communication has instead

constituted channels in diffusion of lies, increased rate of prostitution, crime and motor accidents on our roads” (Obasi, 2015).

Therefore, there is every reason to use these media systems to abridge the rural/urban and global digital divides so that their functions can be complementary, checks and balances as interdependent on one another.

To avert a situation where the divides would widen to a point one system would swallow the other, we recommend as follow:

1. Serious communication studies that can proffer means of integrating traditional modes of communication with the rapidly developing ICTs media of communication.
2. Proactive approach should be adopted in monitoring the kind of media contents via internet that our youths are consuming in order to secure safe and orderly tomorrow.
3. To insist that traditional modes of communication are the best for African rural communities, and support that by exemplary use of the Oramedia in most of our information and communication needs.

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