CULTURE AND NIGERIAN IDENTITY IN THE PRINT MEDIA

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Abstract
The mass media is an important factor in Nigeria. They have important roles to play in the area of cultural education and national development. The mass media support and enhance development programmes in the country and should be one of the channels through which cultural values and ideas will be disseminated. The cultural heritage and lifestyle of citizens in a community is learned and passed from generation to generation, people learn and embrace new ideas, new ways of behaving and new and emerging trends. This paper examines culture, impact of globalization on Nigerian cultural heritage, and the role the print media play in inculcating Nigerian cultural heritage to the citizens and in its preservation. It employs media dependency theory highlighting that people turn to the media for social change. It concludes that the print media should play a major role in the dissemination and preservation of Nigerian cultural heritage thereby ensuring positive behavior and social change among the citizens.

Keywords: Culture, Cultural education, Cultural heritage, Preservation, Print media,

Introduction
The media play an important role of shaping public image of the masses and in so doing pressure them to behave according to cultural norms of their country and this is achieved with communication which plays a vital role in development, bringing about behavior and lifestyle changes. Any activity to be successfully accomplished requires communication, and effective communication will be achieved when a person is able to convey what he wants to say clearly and precisely and is able to understand correctly what the other person is saying. The cultural and lifestyle of citizens in a community is learned and passed from generation to generation and the culture of a particular society is dynamic, people learn and embrace new ideas, new ways of behaving and new and emerging trends. Every culture should be preserved for it is a society’s distinct way of life. Cultural education is done through communication channels like telecommunication and the mass media since everyone engage in intrapersonal, dyadic, small-group, public, mass communication and computer-assisted or online communication (Gamble & Gamble, 2010:4). The mass media is an important factor in Nigeria. They have important roles to play in the area of cultural education and national development. The mass media support and enhance development programmes in the country. The media offers a learning ground for people, and are used to learn about what is happening around the world (Turow, 2009, p. 21). The masses learn from the media, and rely on the media for information getting educated in the process.

Statement of the Problem
It has been observed that culture determines the developmental pace of a society because the traditional values of a people are related to the pace with which they accept or reject the demands
of socio-economic development. The culture of every nation is an important aspect of that nation and should be preserved especially by the media which exposes the masses to the activities happening around them. This paper will explore the role the print media is playing in passing Nigerians culture from one generation to the next and in its preservation.

**Objectives of the Study**

The media play an important role of shaping public image of the masses and in so doing pressure them to behave according to cultural norms of the country. The objective of this paper is to examine the impact the print media have made in sensitizing, promoting and educating the Nigerian public their cultural values thereby helping them to understand their identity and maintain it.

**Theoretical Framework**

This paper considers media dependency theory which highlights that people turn to the media for social change. The masses depend on the media to be aware of Nigerian culture and its practices thereby imbibing those practices and passing them to others. The media are channels through which information is passed across to the people/public at the same time. The messages of the media are influential and they could influence negatively or positively depending on the intention of the message communicated. The media as gatekeepers and the watchdog of the society are seen as credible source of information thus the masses rely on them.

**Culture and its Characteristics**

Culture is the lifestyle of the people within a group and denotes their values, beliefs, artifacts, behavior and communication. It is passed from one generation to another. “A culture exists when a distinct way of life shapes what a group of people believes, values and does” (Wood, 2006). The culture of one group is distinct from another based on different values, beliefs, norms, and other characteristics. The way a group understands and attaches meaning to an issue might be different from another group. For example, the youth and the elderly in a society, their interpretation of some issues might be different. Nigerian cultural heritage is propagated and preserved through cultural expressions of art such as, music, songs, and dance. Mode of greeting is highly valued though different in the various subcultures. Marriage rites are also important but different in the various subcultures (Nwagbara and Umor, 2012). The Nigerian cultural values are distinct and vary from one region to the other and Nigerians are known for these distinct heritages- the music, songs, dance, marriage rites, greetings, dressing etc.

According to Nwagbara and Umor (2012), “the Nigerian culture is a complex subject that involves more than music and dancing or arts in general. It encompasses the material and non-material aspects of culture. The material includes the food, clothing etc. while the non-material includes philosophical and creative aspects”. Culture is dynamic, it evolves and changes over time. Culture must adapt to the natural world (geographic location, available natural resources, and climate changes) and to human activities (invention, war etc) and they must evolve in order to survive. Igwe and Adeyemi (2011:18), defines culture as “truly the totality of a people’s way of life at a given point in time. Culture involves the way people eat, worship, interact, perform socio-economic, political, educational and diverse activities within such a country or society”. Culture plays a role for societal transformation and development, for the stability of a society is ensured through the transmission of cultural values.

Culture influences what people communicate, to whom they communicate and how they communicate. From the moment we are born our culture imposes its rules of behavior on us, we learn and understand the meaning of our non verbal cues, we learn about respect to elders – what tune of voice to use, the posture, eye contact and how to interact socially, (Novinger, 2008).
People from different culture with same language might have same word meaning different things which might affect the understanding of what is communicated since culture provides people with ways of thinking, seeing, hearing, and interpreting the world. (Otobo, 2008) states that, “when languages are different, and translation has to be used to communicate, the potential for misunderstanding is increased. The same words can mean different things to people from different cultures, even when they speak the ‘same’ language”.

Culture is passed from generation to generation, the norms, values, beliefs and distinctiveness of a culture are transmitted from one generation to another. People in a particular society will know what is expected of them because their behaviours would be guided by their culture. Culture is learned through observation, imitation, and interaction with the surroundings. Culture is not biologically inherited, humans consciously or unconsciously learn their culture. It could be done in a formal or informal setting. The more we interact and associate with others or people in our culture, the more the norms, beliefs and values of that culture will be understood. The learning process involves communication, this could be in the form of folktales, proverbs, legends, arts, music, mass media and the internet. People in a community learn culture as part of the natural process of growing up, and those beliefs, ideas and values are applied in that community (Diller, 1999).

Culture is symbolic, a symbol is anything that represents things, and it is attached with a particular meaning. Symbols are arbitrary, ambiguous, and abstract. Language involves the use of symbols and individuals communicate in their language with symbols which can be through arts, music or other forms of societal actions.

Culture is dynamic, it is subject to change. Cultural change is not encompassing, though there are certain things in a culture that remain the same, for example, values on ethics and morals, beliefs, norms and ideologies. There are some cultural practices that are no longer useful today because there is continuous change of culture as new ways of life evolved by the changing conditions of the societal life.

Globalisation and Culture

Globalisation is the interconnectedness of the world views, ideas, and beliefs. It is the integration of people of different nations involving their economy, environment and lifestyle. For Yusuf (2012) “globalization is a process of increased integration of national economy with the rest of the world to create a more coherent global economy. This can be achieved through the creation of a global market place in which free markets; investment flows, trade and information are integrated”. It integrates nations, enabling them to be connected to one another.

Globalization in some ways has affected the culture of countries because of the creation of international free market. The economy of some countries are boosting to the expense of their cultural values, beliefs and norms. Globalisation tends to be indifferent to cultural values around the world. Sometimes local or indigenous cultural values of countries are being relegated to the background because of globalisation.

Major factors of globalisation include transportation, telecommunications, and the internet which to some extent have affected culture. Globalization has brought both positive and negative effect in Nigeria, most cities are now developed, we now have sophisticated machineries and technologies but some areas have been affected negatively. In Nigeria for example, the youth focus more on the internet and telecommunications for entertainment and gradually loosing interest in their cultural values. According to (Nwegbu, Eze, & Asogwa, 2011),

Nigerians use and read books written in foreign language faster and more fluently than those written in local languages.
In Nigeria, cultural globalization has impacted on the number of Movies produced by Nigeria Nollywood. Movies produced in English are much more than those performed and produced in Igbo and other Nigerian languages.

The age of folklores are gradually going, no more stories of the past generations which help to teach the cultural values of a community the citizens prefer to watch late night movies or go to the cinemas. For Salawu (2006:1), “globalisation is seen to be the agenda of the United States – led western world. It is an idea that tends to present the philosophy of the United States – led west as the ultimate wisdom of the entire world.” The economic, political and cultural lifestyle of the western world might be copied indirectly or directly affecting the beliefs of other nations. The internet is not left out, people rely more on the internet because it makes available a lot of things, for example; electronic books, advertising, journals, video conferencing etc. The media broadcast feature more of western programmes in Nigeria, they circulate information that pertains to the west. Hollywood films are featured more than Nollywood films, thereby promoting western culture. Since culture is passed from one generation to another, what then is passed to this present generation reading? How many cultural programmes are promoted on the internet which will help to preserve Nigerians culture in cyberspace?

Globalisation will make nations to borrow others culture (borrowing across cultures), there would not be diversity of culture, cultures will be alike and not distinct anymore. There is the preference for western food, music, art and language, even the pronunciation of words. Individuals see themselves as local when they pronounce words with their indigenous language accent and when they associate themselves with their indigenous food and music. Africans are known for their communal lifestyles but this is gradually fading away, they eat together, share their problems together, and relate collectively, some of the cultural values are gradually becoming individualistic.

Western culture has a profound and immense influence on African culture. Globalisation brought in telecommunications, advance in pharmaceuticals, engineering, medicine, improved business techniques, for financial management, improve art works which have positively impacted the nation but they have also affected our cultural norms. Globalization transmits the cultural pattern of developed countries to our country.

People prefer to entertain themselves by watching western programmes, and because of that we are gradually embracing western culture., people now imitate the western way of life, their food, modes of transport, music, without regard for the local culture. Nigeria is a society with abundant rich cultural heritage that are within the diverse ethnic nationalities. Some of these cultural heritages are language, marriage rites, burial rites, birth rites, dressing, greeting, music, folklore, religion, and other tangible cultural monuments, natural sites and cultural landscapes. Some of these cultures have died due to western cultural influence and therefore need to be revitalized (Nwegbu, et al, 2011). The dominance of western products in the country poses a threat to our cultural identity.

The Role of Communication in Cultural Development

Communication according to Wood (2006) “is a systemic process in which people interact with and through symbols to create and interpret”. It “is the vehicle by which meanings are conveyed, identity is composed and reinforced, and feelings are expressed”. (Le Baron, 2003). Communication is not chaotic but follows a process, where message is passed from one person to another, the message might be in music, creative art, verbal or non verbal.
be understood in a particular context, hence our culture affects how we communicate. Communication is used to ensure that culture is passed from one generation to another. Communication media and techniques are used to disseminate information and bring about positive behavior and social change. Development programmes are communicated to the targeted audience. Development involves change, new ways of life and these new ideas, methods and the adoption of them are circulated through communication channels. It integrates the power of media, using different media- radio, newspaper, television, and the internet with local community systems to communicate to the society and induce sustainable change. When we do not understand a particular culture, communication might be affected because the intended meaning might be distorted, misrepresented and misunderstood. The communication process involves several stages, each of which offers potential barriers to effective communication. Communication expresses culture and sustains it. The norms and practices of a person’s culture which is different from another’s will have effect on communication and might hinder effective development. For example, the workplace, different people from different cultural background come together for one goal - the growth of a particular firm. The awareness of their different cultural norms will help the workers to experience effective communication. Moemeka (2000:139) opines that,

In the developing world, communication has a greater role to play. Its principal function is not merely to inform, but to educate with a view to raising the aspirations of the people in the right direction, generating among them the willingness to work in order to improve on their conditions, motivating them to action and guiding and directing their activities to successful end

Cultural differences are obstacles to effective communication and for development to be effective in our multicultural society, we need to understand different heritages and the communication practices they foster.

There are some cultural factors that affect communication, some of which are: gender – women and men use communication differently and they tend to misunderstand one another. For example, women seek for empathy and support instead of advice when discussing their problems with men while men seek for advice and not empathy and support. Socio-economic – the different social status of people affect how they communicate. Race, ethnicity, religion, age and educational background all pose a problem to effective communication.

There are ways in which culture interferes with communication thereby hindering development. Stella Ting-Toomey describes three ways culture can interfere with effective cross-cultural understanding. Cognitive Constraints – these are worldview that provide backdrop that all new information is compared to or inserted into.

Behaviour Constraints - each culture has its own rules on behaviour which affects verbal and nonverbal communication

Emotional Constraints - different cultures regulate the display of emotion differently. Some people’s emotions are revealed while others are hidden.

All these differences if not well understood and harnessed will lead to communication problems. According to Novinger (2008), “communication specialists estimate that some two-thirds to three-fourths of our communication take place nonverbally through behaviour. Behaviour itself is learned from our culture and all behaviour communicates. Since we cannot stop behaving in one way or another, we cannot stop communicating”. Communication must always take place,
both verbally and nonverbally and we need to accommodate each other when speaking, bearing in mind both the verbal and nonverbal communications

**The Print Media, Cultural Education and Development in Nigeria**

Culture plays a role for societal transformation and development, the stability of a society is ensured through the transmission of cultural values. PuyeFranz (2010) notes that, *culture or 'the way of life of a people, their ideas, acts, and artifacts' is one of the main determinants of whether a society develops rapidly or slowly. Numerous studies by anthropologists show that the traditional values of a people are closely related to the pace with which they accept or reject the demands of modern industrial or commercial operations. Since no society in the modern world exists in a vacuum, it is the pre-established patterns of culture which, to a large extent, determine whether that society accepts or resists innovation and change and the speed with which this is done.*

Culture gives life structure and meaning because one acts and reacts based on one’s cultural beliefs, norms and values. Culture determines the developmental pace of a society because the traditional values of a people are related to the pace with which they accept or reject the demands of socio-economic development. The media permeate our daily lives and can be used as the pivot of cultural campaigns in the country, thus, the media is seen as purveyor of education and development. The Nigerian media is used to strengthen the popular art forms of Nigerians, highlighting Nigeria identity. The media influence our relationship with the other countries and have a transformative impact on culture and the society. The mass media inform, entertain, persuade and is pervasive in nature. “The mass media transmit cultural values through history. Past generations talk to us through mass media, mostly books, just as we, often not realizing it, talk to future generations. The media also diffuse values and ideas contemporaneously.” (Vivian, 2001:395). The media as an agent of development has been working in the area of cultural development in Nigeria. They present educational programmes that propagate our culture, the print media provide information that improves the lifestyle of the masses and the masses have been influenced greatly by these programmes. The television and the radio have been doing good work of promoting Nigerian culture but not much has been said about the print media. The radio station programmes provide information and educate the listeners gearing them towards the protection of public interest. According to (Ayakoroma, May 2011), “the medium gave adequate expression to the cultures of the diverse people of Nigeria. Radio broadcasting popularized Nigerian languages, exposed the music and culture of Nigeria to the international community”. The programmes that are featured in radio are short stories, talks, music, sports, playlets, announcements, etc. These days more of entertainment (music mainly) programmes are featured because of their quest to have more listeners. The messages in some of the songs do not portray the Nigerian cultural values, the lyrics are more on personal experiences and may not have the expected impact on the masses. The Television draws the widest viewership because of its audio and visual qualities. It is seen in most homes irrespective of people’s financial status. Most people use it for leisure and to know happenings around them. Onabajo (2005) opines that, “the television is still making a lot of impact on the economic, political, social, cultural and educational advancement of the nation…it has the ability to activate, socialize, homogenize, and even adapt people to their own culture”.

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The print media carry current information and keep the reader up to date with current issues. It has advantage over others because it is read not heard or viewed. Readers tend to read it several times for maximum understanding and it can be stored for future reference but it is read by the literate in the society. Newspaper journey in Nigeria started in 1859 when Reverend Henry Townsend released Iwe Iroyin fun Awon Ara Egba Ati Yoruba (The Newspaper for the Egba’s and Yoruba). In 1926, the Nigerian Daily Times was started by the Nigerian Printing and Publishing Company. The West African Pilot of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and The Nigerian Tribune of Chief Obafemi Awolowo started in 1936 and 1940 respectively (Igbeka & Ola, 2010). Today, there are so many newspapers in circulation, some of them are, The Punch, The Guardian, This Day, Vanguard, Leadership etc. The Newspaper was initially an agent of political propaganda and war, some of the newspapers had issues with the government which led to sanctioning and restriction from free press. Only a few newspapers are written in indigenous language. The newspapers have art pages where cultural artefacts like, food, dressing, music, literature and art works of the country are featured, these depict some of the cultural values of Nigerians but more work need to be done. Tsebee (2011) citing Elaigwu states that, 

Ideally, the mass media should perform certain functions in reaction to challenges of nation - building ... media - men also have another role, that of providing historical contexts and perspectives for the masses. Featuring articles in papers, documentary series on television and radio and others help to give invaluable historical contexts to current society, especially as more people have access to media outputs such as, radio/TV, newspapers and other printed matters. The building up of a sense of nationhood can only be effectively done in historical contexts, as mistakes of past become assets of today, and success of today become incentives for tomorrow

Adequate media coverage by the print media will help to create awareness of Nigerians cultural heritage, build a conservation of the various forms of cultural heritage for sustainable economical, social and cultural development.

**Conclusion**

The culture of any society is important because that is what differentiates that society from another. Culture affects how we interact with our environment and relate with others. The culture of Nigerians can be communicated to the citizens by employing the mass media which brings about cultural change and the preservation of culture. The media affect our relationship with the world and have a transformative impact on culture and the society at large. They are seen as motivators and have credibility, communicating to the society through the programmes they feature. Most times people are not connected to their cultural heritage because they may know nothing or feel nothing about where they come from but reading the articles featured in the print media will help them to know and appreciate their root.

**Recommendation**

Cultural education should be communicated through the mass media, the mass media campaign can be used to bring about cultural behavioural change and there should be an integration of electronic, print and digital media to sustain and preserve Nigerian culture. In order to maintain the transmission of cultural information to the masses, the government and media owners should pay salaries adequate to attract and retain personnel, provide trainings on the countries cultural values, norms and beliefs and make available resources to maintain and sustain the programmes and make broadcast content reflect on cultural issues.
The print media practitioners should also ensure that Nigerian indigenous culture would be in the media since one of their responsibilities is to promote Nigerian indigenous culture, moral and community life. The different media should be integrated in order to achieve maximum cultural transformation.

Media practitioners should learn from veterans, they need training that will expose them more to our cultural heritage, because, too much exposure to western way of life will make them to tend towards their world view and affect the information they pass across. The National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO), initiated a quarterly media workshop for Arts writers and editors in Nigeria which kick started on May 19, 2010, should be taken to every states of the federation, so that media practitioners especially cultural journalist will fully participate.

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