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# GLOBALIZATION, SOCIAL MEDIA AND IMPERATIVES IN THE PROMOTION OF NIGERIAN CULTURAL VALUES

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## **ABSTRACT**

Social media is undoubtedly one of the factors used in measuring the effect of globalization in the world. As countries of the world strive for sustainable development on account of the fact that the world has become compressed as a global village, communication through the use of social media has been outstanding. The promotion of different cultural values of the world has also been possible in this direction. While some countries rely on the effectiveness of the social media to fit into the globalization grid for sustainable development in terms of culture cum economy, others especially the third world seem to see globalization as an obstruction to their development. This forms the interest of this study to determine the effectiveness of promoting the Nigerian cultural values in the globalization grid through the use of social media. This is a qualitative study that describes the dependence on social media for communication purpose among the population in Calabar, Cross River State of Nigeria, and the extent to which the diffuse information globally. The submission, therefore, is that globalization is a paradigm for sustainable development of countries of the world; and based on the pervasiveness of the social media, Nigeria can positively promote her cultural values globally.

**Contribution/Originality:** This paper is one of the few studies which have investigated the positives of cultural cum socio-economic relevance of globalization in developing economies like Nigeria; and has demonstrated how effective the social media can be as a factor in globalization paradigm to promote cultural values.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The world today is more developed than it was before the advent of technological inventions. From analogue, the world is now digitalized and everybody is in tune with this age of digitalization. Countries of the world have found ways of attaining development and to further promote their values within the global sphere. This quest supposedly keyed into the thought of Marshal McLuhan that the world is a global village, and which (Baran, 2010) further explains as a phenomenon of shrinking the world and making it a place where people" become increasingly involved in one another's lives through the media". Based on Baran (2010) account, for McLuhan, a global village is developed when people of other communities who were once separated from their neighbours or some other communities because of distance begin to relate closely and also enjoy positive and beneficial services from that relationship. It is therefore possible to admit that globalization is key to understanding the dynamics of development in any cultural sphere.

The media are undisputed agents of globalization, which suggests that they propagate and promote values of different cultures of the world. As a branch of media, social media have evolved as new technology in respect to globalization, and especially to further ensure the effectiveness of globalizing the world. The use of social media today ensures immediacy and wider reception of contents that possibly can be accessed by over 80 per cent of world's population. It is in this regard that cultures and other values of different people are promoted and made accessible to transnational audiences.

Cultural values are typically those standards that the people hold as distinctive elements that qualify them as unique. The issue is that these values encourage all religious, political, and social persuasions to interact, based upon their mutual commitment to the greater good, practicing, imparting, and celebrating values of the people in the society they belong. In this age of globalization, social media are readily available to promote cultural contents that are replete with values a particular set of people would always uphold and feel proud of. This is therefore to say that, in this age of digital communication, every community in Africa, especially Nigeria, and beyond would feel proud to have her own values shared in the global sphere.

## 2. METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATION

This is a qualitative analysis of the pervasiveness of social media in the age of globalization. Basically, this study would rely on descriptive method as well as a little bit of survey to espouse the significance of social media in the promotion of Nigerian cultural values in the globalization grid. To this end, some level of description on how the social media operate in relation to the variable would be explained especially in terms of usage and compliance among the Nigerian people. Social media users in Calabar, Cross River State of Nigeria formed the population for this study, which concentrated on facebook platform, Whatsapp, twitter, youtube etc.

In terms of theory, the diffusion of information and innovation model can be useful as it has a clear relationship in enhancing universal acceptability of products through the media. In the diffusion of information and innovation model, Littlejohn (1996) states that "an idea spreads from a point of origin to surrounding geographic areas or from a person to person within a single area" (p.335). Littlejohn (1996) further states that this activity is reputed to have an effect on social change through invention or communication that may occur internally in a group or superficially by way of interaction with external change agent.

In this theory, interpersonal networks are considered to have played significant roles over channels of mass communication, but this research will attempt a proof to show the relevance of Nigerian media especially the film medium in causing an effect in the global sphere. Explaining the diffusion of innovation theory, Defleur (2010) picks an analysis of Ryan and Gross which expresses that there are stages in diffusion of information with different categories of adopters involved in the process through a number of channels to impact on the adopters. According to him, this process helps in understanding how new traits spread through a relevant population of adopting units. The relevance of this theory in the study is to help show that new phenomenon such as globalization can be useful to the development of culture through its spread.

## 3. PERSPECTIVES ON GLOBALIZATION

The concept of globalization aims at unifying the entire world by reaching distances and making people to share ideas, understand and perhaps be accountable to one another. For critics and skeptics, Baran (2010) observes that McLuhan was only revealing his unrealistic, utopian infatuation for technology with the idea of a global village. Burton (2010) also argues that the world as a global village is basically and discretely the promotion of cultural imperialism, the intimidation and destruction of 'developing' cultures by 'developed' cultures.

The role of America in globalizing the world is also brought into this argument. Rodman (2006) argues that "the displacement of other developing traditional cultures with American culture through the global dominance of American media is a typical example of cultural imperialism" (p. 14). This contention sees globalization as typically

imperialistic by way of Americanizing the global media space through corporate media networks like the Cable News Network (CNN), Sky News, Fox News etc.

Arguably, Nigeria is considered to be facing these effects because developed countries are said to extend their overwhelming structure over those of the developing or third world countries. On this contention, the developed nations impose their media products on the developing countries that are considered as being uncompromisingly averse to a prototypical free cultural exchange and mutual benefits; in terms of production and distribution of cultural properties, political economy of corporate media conglomeration and other transnational and internationalization activities. For this reason, Branston and Stafford (2007) maintain that globalization is a result of capitalist ideology in media organization with the media products of developed countries successfully exported through television to developing countries. Branston and Stafford (2007) stress that globalization through the media promote;

ways in which technologies can overcome global distances so that people live in a world which seems borderless and where images of events can be relayed instantaneously; ways that are particular to an economic system. The free market or global capitalism permeates the globe. (p. 479)

These considerations uphold that dominant ideologies always have their way over smaller economies that try to catch in with the pace of development system. Although this portends the hegemony of globalization, we would depend on the fact that convergence of cultural, media, social and economic activities are promotional attributes of globalization that can facilitate cultural development. Rodman (2006) explains further while referring to media globalization that since "1980s, advertising has become an international business while agencies, especially those in the United States, Japan and Britain have been growing and merging into transnational behemoths" (p. 415). Burton (2010) argues this in terms of global news, which he refers to as news meant for a national audience but with a world perspective. The issue here is that news pervades public sphere with the use of technologies, a feat not possible until recently. He claims that there is a positive effect of globalization and uses Al Jazeera as an example to discountenance the question of imperialism, power and hegemony of the 'West', referred to as the 'developed countries'. Burton (2010) writes.

But globalization, such as it is, has been accompanied by counterforces of regionalism and resurgences of national and international identities. So too, the creation of global news agencies and news makers, alongside other trans-national media institutions has been accompanied by the appearance of regional news centres and specialist agencies which feed into the multi-nationals. (p. 247)

There seems to be a positive relationship that exists between globalization and the media. In this regard, Burton (2010) expressly claims that "globalization introduces new forms of world independence and shows a sign of declining grip of the west over the rest of the world" (2). On account of this, globalization can be viewed as a means of encouraging the cultural promotion of commodities with social, economic and political content. Thus Burton (2010) holds that products like local music still have the comparative advantage of global flow as alternative. Idolor (2007) simply considers globalization as "the integration of the activities of various people irrespective of distance and national boundaries through new information, communication, transportation and technological applications" (p. 103).

However, in the face of global competition local culture is also considered being threatened by manifested culture. This view is said to be held strongly by modernist and postmodernist theories. Cvetkovich and Douglas (1997) further explain this.

Both modern and postmodern theorists argue that the world today is organized by increasing globalization, which is strengthening the dominance of a world capitalist economic system,

supplanting the primacy of the nation-state by transnational corporations and organizations, eroding local cultures and traditions through a global culture (p. 1).

In support of this argument, the theorists see the era of globalization as a period when cultural attributes of the local society is impacted upon by the communication or media power of the global culture. To them, local culture is susceptible to the power of the global media by depending on them for information and which could manifest the culture foreign to the people. Although it is observed that it could be difficult to attain the homogenization of cultures consequent upon the effect of global culture, the strength of the pervasiveness of western cultures is acknowledged by this argument. That is there is the tendency for either a cultural implosion of the local identities or a reshape, a manifestation of what is globally accepted into local identities. Cvetkovich and Douglas (1997) argue in support of this thus:

The intersection of the global and local is producing new matrixes to legitimize the production of hybrid identities, thus expanding the realm of self-definition. And so although global forces can be oppressive and erode cultural traditions and identities they can also provide new material to rework one's identity and can empower people to revolt against traditional forms and styles to create new, more emancipatory ones. (p. 10)

Be that as it may, there is no doubt that local or national culture offers a sense of identity for the people of own culture and even those who reside as tenants. This identity is a key to "common understandings, traditions, and values that are integral to the identification of plans of action" for the improvement of livelihood (Brennan *et al.*, 2011). According to Brennan *et al.* (2011) this kind of culture "contributes to building a sense of local identity and solidarity as well as boosting the confidence the communities have for coming together to address specific needs and problems". They further posit that "local commitment among residents based on culture and common identity can serve as a valuable tool in shaping the effectiveness of development options and local actions" (Brennan *et al.*, 2011) and can sustain social improvement efforts.

This could be taken as a precursor to the position that the people's local culture can be celebrated for popularity above manifested culture prune by global culture. Sule (1991) reasons that the fear in making local culture popular among western culture is conditioned by the action of the third world cultures. Sule (1991) explains it this way.

It is simply that third world functionaries are so dazzled by the seeming sophistication of conditions in Europe and America that they assume that for anything to succeed, in whatever part of the world, that thing has to be patterned in exactly the same manner as obtains in the western world (p. 32).

Sule (1991) therefore, suggests that because culture is not just a component of human experience but the totality of the human experience, "whatever we do, as a people, and in whatever form, should be in keeping with our indigenous circumstances and requirement and, therefore, a manifestation of our culture" (p. 33). This serves as a support particularly to indigenous communities, who hold tenaciously to their cultures as their richest heritage that reminds them of their roots, history and style of living. This is considered as their pride and not destruction in the age of globalization.

Bhandari and Almas (2005) say globalization as a term is a paradigm for understanding development in the world and is considered as an

integration into the world economy, eliminations of trade barriers, extraordinary mobility of human capital, goods and services as well as interconnectedness of ideas and norms that reshape not only our understanding of existing social and political institutions but also transform them into new socio-political and economic entities (p. 105).

Giving a characteristic view of the economic value of the concept, which he referred to as transnationalization, Khor (2001) states that: "The major feature of globalization is the growing concentration and monopolization of economic resources and power by transnational corporations and by global financial firms and the funds" (p. 4a).

According to Khor, "fewer and fewer transnational corporations gain large and are rapidly increasing in proportion of the control of world economic resources, production and market shares" (p. 4b). Here, developing countries find globalization an enemy that would only benefit the powerful countries in their transnational activities. Sizeable workforce in the developing world is said to be exploited with no commensurate dividend to show for the development of the area. Udoette (2004) testifies:

It is the third world in fact that supplies more than two thirds of labour that puts into the world market the goods produced by such multinational companies as MacDonald, Motorola, Nokia, Philips, Siemens, Guiness, M&B, PZ (Paterson Zochonies), Total, Mobil, Shell, Agip, etc, that make Europe and America rich and influential. Yet, it has always remained on the margins of economic growth and development. Globalization, rather than creating a true global village where every country of the world has a chance to develop, appears to be a gigantic programme of global politics initiated and controlled by a few countries and their multinational companies and allies to make the poorer countries to be perpetually poor and dependent on them. (p. 19)

In the Nigerian society, globalization is seen as an exploitation of all economic potentials of the country such as the Calabar free trade zone created by globalization to provide the multinationals not only cheap labour, but also cheap supply of infrastructure. This is supported by Yusuf (2010) who says the economy of Nigeria has sagged because the country relies heavily on importation of goods against production and exportation it formally enjoyed. Before globalization became popular in this part of the world, Sub-saharan African countries like Nigeria managed their economies by regulating economic activities to enhance growth. Today economic management is dependent on deregulation policy thus encouraging competitiveness. In clear terms;

Nigeria's economy like other developing economies was heavily regulated by the state. Under the regulated economy, restrictive business practices on import and export were in place. These include use of import licence, imposition of tariffs quota, control of foreign exchange and sometimes outright ban on importation. During this period, self-reliance was the slogan. However, this has now been replaced by deregulation, economic liberalization and privatization of the national economic activities. The hope is that this new approach will accelerate rapid economic growth and development. Nigeria has now become a big importer of rice to the detriment of locally produced rice. Most Nigerians prefer American Rice. This has forced the production of local rice to be reduced (Yusuf, 2010).

Derefaka (2008) thinks that irrespective of the experience Nigeria has occasioned by globalization, Nigerians and other Africans need to participate in what he referred to as the seeming inevitable or unstoppable process with recognizable identity. This, therefore, explains the term as a global connectedness of livelihoods and of the production of goods and services and a situation that brings about the picture of a borderless world with greater economic integration that enhances the living standards of people across the globe.

Popular art forms and media like music, dance, films have since evolved even in social media following the influence of globalization in the society. They are replete in every society with the fad which involves a class of new unofficial art forms that can form a mosaic of culture or beliefs, concerned with social change and associated with the people. Iwara (2008) has explicitly given a clarification about globalization being negative or not.

Let me quickly add that, in my view, globalization is not such a bad thing. It has contributed, it is true, to the devastation and the pangs of poverty that are being experienced in this country and Africa generally. But I think it is also a wakeup call to many things that ought not to happen to us and to many things that we ought to think about and to do in order to improve the lot of our people. Globalization has certainly opened our eyes to our needs and it is up to us to be creative and competitive, and to find solutions to our many problems, including those of identity politics and the sustenance of our democratic institutions. (p. 21)

## 4. UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL MEDIA

From Merriam-Webster (2017) social media may be defined as "Forms of electronic communication (such as Web sites) through which people create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages". The foregoing is just like a conventional view of what the media especially the new media represent. However, a cursory understanding of social media would simply refer to sources of communication that are enhanced by internet connectivity. That is to say, one can only access information on the social media only when the person is linked to internet sources. This is further reinforced by Dewing (2012) in the light that social media are about the wide range of internet based and mobile services that allow users to participate in online exchanges, contribute user-created content or join online communities. In another perspective, Chmielewski cited in Cohen (2011) opines that social media do not refer to what people do or say, but they are about what people do and say together, worldwide, to communicate in all directions at any time, by any possible digital means. It can therefore be safe to say that social media encourages communality, involvement and engagement of all peoples in the society.

The above contention is not different from the position of globalization as already discussed. Between globalization and social media the key ingredients or elements can simply be taken as integration, communality, engagement, involvement and borderlessness. This is just to say that social media break boundaries to integrate people, engage and involve them in issues of development thus making the society to live as one. In corroborating the foregoing, Wikipedia (2017) affirms that social media are interactive, allow users to create content as they like, and facilitate the development of online social networks by connecting profiles of people to other people or groups.

When talking about social media, the mind would be definitely anchored on facebook, youtube, twitter, linkedIn, whatsapp etc. Facebook is an online social networking site that allows users to create their personal profiles, share photos and videos, and communicate with other users. Youtube is an online site where videos are specifically shared. Twitter is an internet service that allows users to post "tweets" or messages for their followers to see updates in real-time. LinkedIn is a networking website for the business community that allows users to create professional profiles, post resumes, and communicate with other professionals and job-seekers. Whatsapp is an online network that allows users to create communities for the sharing of pictures, videos and messages.

The capacity and speed of the network infrastructure has dramatically increased in most parts of the world facilitating more possibilities and the experience of immediacy. The Internet, from its inception, enabled real time forms of communication (initially restricted to text) and delayed forms, providing users choices about when to consult, read, or view content. Web 2.0 and broadband infrastructures have increased opportunities for immediate 'in-real-time' online interaction. In addition to immediacy and delayed interaction, a distinction is often drawn among one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many multi-directional communication. Social media are seen as convergent technologies because they combine these different forms of communication into one platform. In addition to this social media also blur the distinction between what are private and what are public forms of communication. Social media also enable few-to-few communication, which is especially relevant for activists and social movements. Chatting, for example, can take place on a one-to-one basis, but it can also be used to facilitate an online conversation between a few participants (Cammaerts, 2015).

All these social media platforms are quite active and usable in promoting what the people want and especially their cultural practices. According to Omoera and Ryanga (2017) Arab Spring had long seen the pervasiveness and the virility of social media so much so that facebook, youtube and twitter were used to organize demonstration and invite people to join against the general oppression of the citizens by the government at a time. The speed and the wide coverage of the media are the main reason for this strength.

## 5. CULTURAL VALUES PROMOTION: A DISCOURSE

The world is shrinking by the minutes occasioned by the potency of social media. Friends, family members and other groups of people undoubtedly find social media as fundamental to sharing their ideas and have interactive

sessions. There are many arguments to the fact that social media have accounted for laxity in reading among students in Nigerian schools. Some have also admitted that this form of media have encouraged other vices in the likes of decadence in moral standards especially vulgarity among youths and cybercrime. At a point in 2016, the Nigerian Government started contemplating on how to establish a law to regulate the use of social media, because most Nigerians have been using the networks for some sort of unpleasant commentaries that are not considered valuable for the Nigerian national identity. The film medium has also suffered this kind of criticism based on what is considered as poor representation of Nigerians abroad.

But Cammaerts (2015) clearly observes that twitter was not invented to coordinate protest events (or any crime), rather such development occur from the way users appropriate technologies and embed them in their everyday practices, retooling them to suit their needs and purposes. Given the Nigerian experience, people have used the social media for some positive protest that attracted global interest. Omoera and Ryanga (2017) recount that in April 2014 when Boko Haram terrorists took away over 200 girls in Chibok, a civil rights group launched a social media advocacy #bringbackourgirls#, and "the world was suddenly urging the Nigerian government to act; to 'bring back our girls'" (p. 43).

The above viewpoint credits the place of social media in the promotion of Nigerian cultural values. Just as the civil rights group rose up to champion the cause of bringing back the girls, there is no gainsaying the fact that the people have a primary purpose to protect their culture to the best of their ability and demonstrate it as a pattern for their identification. In culture, we have those elements the society values; and in a typical African environment like Nigeria, cultural values account for morality and morality is key to the way of life of the people. A typical African community would always pay regard to "the sense of community life, the sacredness of life, respect for religion, good human relationship, respect for authority, respect for elders, respect for truth, respect for own language, and respect for time" (Onwubiko, 1991). No one thing, person or group of persons that is bad or acts offensively is accepted in the society, and this is the reason what is good and appreciated as being good is always identified and celebrated.

A survey of compliance by Nigerian youths in social media shows that over 80 percent including those in secondary and tertiary institutions are users of different platforms. The question is that out of this number, not more than 1 percent can clearly use the platforms for positive post that does not betray morality. To them, the age of globalization is the time to be seen and heard, irrespective of quality in content, by people outside the Nigerian shores. However, globalization offers social media to all cultures and conditions them to face the competition of promoting their cultural values for global acceptability as they feel about cultures thought to be hegemonizing others.

The advent of cable and satellite stations marked the beginning of international broadcasting to feed the audience with issues that concern the country they operate from. The first media companies to extend their operations abroad significantly were news agencies such as the Associated Press, AP, Reuters and United Press International. According to Vivian (2002) only "companies that produce all kinds of media messages, not just news, are engaged in finding global markets" (p. 421). While AP has 72 foreign bureaus across the globe, Reuters is reputed to serve more than 6,500 media organizations in the world. According to Hasan (2013) "external services or international broadcasting by different countries are aimed at serving their people settled in other countries, and also to propagate the policies of the respective countries" (p. 687). This they do using films, radio satellite, cable, television, newspapers, magazines and other publications to express their freedom in a globalized world.

Social media developed same way and have developed in all especially the youth, the ability to create content. Everyone has a mobile phone or a computer, and with those gadgets it is possible to sit anywhere and feed the social space with whatever content that is found pleasing and appealing. It is the place of Nigerians to create only the contents that can promote Nigerian cultural values. In creating content, no one censors your work, you are the one to develop your work, therefore, good and morally valued content should be developed for global audience. The

theory of diffusion of information and innovation makes it clear that as a new idea that had developed from globalization it must be useful to the people to give valued information that the people will depend on.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Unarguably, globalization has proven to be a paradigm for the encouragement of development across the globe. By the simple understanding that it conjures transnational integration and brings about freedom as well as competition in the development of cultures and other aspects, social media being its agent is thus reputed to bring about such transnational promotions. As a developing country, Nigeria needs to attempt to sale to the world its areas of comparative advantage based on culture; and where the Nollywood has not totally given to the world contents of cultural value, the manipulators of social media platforms should creatively and avoidably make contents to celebrate the country's cultural values and drop the ones that are not considered good enough respectively.

Although government may be right in advocating for the censorship of social media messages, the effort may in the end not be effective because all citizens are qualified to create content and make them available to the audience. This is why, the argument that social media as an agent of globalization is quite potent in ensuring that the Nigerian cultural values are promoted accordingly in the global sphere.

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