# Transmission of African Cultural Heritage by Broadcast Stations in Nigeria

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## Abstract

*Transmission of African cultures and values is a primary function of the mass media whose duty is to prevent the cultural heritage of the people from extinction. To this extent, this research work is an investigation of the transmission of African cultural values by broadcast stations with a view to ascertaining the level of performance of this important function of the media. Content analysis method was employed so that the researcher could adequately measure the portrayal of the socio-cultural values in each of the selected programmes in the selected broadcasting stations. The research question, which formed the basis of the instrument for this investigation, is: what aspect(s) of the African cultural heritage is (are) transmitted in the programmes of these stations? The simple random sampling technique was deemed fit and used for the selection of sample for the content analysis. In doing this, the researcher identified all the indigenous media programmes in each of the broadcast stations. A ballot system was also adopted in picking five programmes from each of the stations. From Africa Independent Television (AIT), the following programmes were selected: 'African Stories', 'Goge Africa', 'Mìnìjọ̀jọ̀', 'Ṣọkọyọkọ̀tọ̀' and 'Fuji House of Commotion'; while from Radio Lagos 107.5 FM, we selected: 'Ẹ̀wẹ̀sọ', 'Ọ̀gẹgèlè', 'Ìṣẹ̀ṣe', 'Ojútáyé' and 'Amúlùúdùn'. The following content categories were used: ideology, technology and organization and were termed aspects of African cultural heritage. Findings revealed that all the three components of culture which were operationalized under the content categories were extensively transmitted in the programmes.*

*Keywords:   African culture, content analysis, broadcast stations, ideology*

## Introduction

Indigenous communication of Africa is the traditional African communication. It is the communication of the African people from time immemorial. It is the way and means of expression of Africans before the arrival of colonialism, when traditional values (including communication) were trampled upon for the 'imported' media. However, the media, according to Severin and Tankard (2001), in a particular social reality, are duty bound to preserve the culture of the people in such social milieu, in the transmission of their programmes. This study aims to ascertain whether or not the selected media stations are living up to their responsibility of culture preservation.

## Communication and Culture

It is important here to examine the ideas of and attempt communication and culture and attempt their relationship. The essence is to unveil the importance of culture in communication and vice versa. Communication is one of the most important aspects of human life, which brings about social interaction thereby leading to the development of the society. Littlejohn (2002:2), in his definition on communication states that, "Communication is intertwined with all of human life and any study of human life must touch on this subject... Communication is one of the most pervasive, important and complex aspects of human life." Thus, Littlejohn underscores the indispensable nature of communication in every subject.

Another scholar, De Vito (1976) explicates that the development of human civilization has been made possible through communication. Insisting that man may not exist as a social creature without communication. Ugboajah (1985:1) states:

> To be is to communicate, without communication man is not different from the lower animals. Our ability to carry symbols around with us to interpret them and relate them around makes us distinct from the lower animals. Without communication, men will cease to exist as social creatures because communication is a social affair.

A critical look at the various definitions and values offered by the scholars above shows that communication is inseparable from all aspects of human life. It also makes us to understand that human civilization is impossible without communication because the ability to share experiences makes civilization possible. Finally, we know that communication is the line of demarcation between man and animals.

Culture, on the other hand, may be regarded as the sum total to a people's way of life. Tylor (1871) sees culture as a complex whole acquired by man as a member of society. The acquired elements include knowledge, morals, religion, customs, habits and so on. Another elaborate definition of culture by a former UNESCO Director-General as cited in Ansah (1988:12-13) is:

> Culture is the end product of all that a society has created in the course of time and as the essential driving force for all that it continues to create, both materially and in the intellectual sphere — something which shapes the awareness and the collective imagination of its members, determining the way they are and the way they see the world... (sic). Containing the seeds of all that a community is capable of producing, it is quintessentially, the repository of its creative genius...

Looking at culture from an anthropological angle, Madubuike (2003:4) sees culture as the social heritage of a group of people, which comprises the ways of thinking, feeling, acting, and communicating. He identifies some elements that are present in every culture: these are language, food-habit, family/marriage patterns, religion, music, funeral ceremonies and dancing. According to him, every culture needs language to communicate for group relationship, understanding and cooperation. He is also of the view that food-habit as provided by the environment distinguishes a culture. For him also, family/marriage patterns, religion, music, funeral ceremonies and dancing, represent the inner (spiritual) aspect of any culture.

Madubuike (2003) further notes that man is the creator of culture and that the social environment in which man lives is responsible for all the ideas that influence man. He further identifies three cultural mechanisms that influence man. They are technology, organization and ideology. A careful observation of our discussion shows that culture and communication are interrelated. Considering Maduibuike's analysis, communication is an inevitable element of the culture. Ansah (1988:19), in his analysis of the role of communication reinforces the relationship of communication and culture thus:

> ... communication ... is a major carrier of culture, and to this extent, it can be used for good or for ill. It helps in the definition, promotion and spread of behaviour patterns and thus can bring about social integration or alienation, depending on the uses to which it is put.

Speaking in line with Ansah's conviction, another communication scholar, Carol T. Rowan as cited in Elewainy (1988:1055) outlines the interrelations of culture and communication when he opines:

> Since culture is an abstraction commonly agreed to refer to the products, knowledge, traditions, skills and beliefs that are shared by a group of people and passed on from generation to generation, its very existence is predicated on the functioning of communication.

Rowan's opinion is that without communication, there will be no culture. Another anthropologist who shares Rowan's view is White (1959). White notes that the production and transmission of all cultures in the world have been made possible by symbolizing in general and by articulating speech in particular. This shows that communication and culture are intertwined and inseparable.

## Mass Media as Vehicle for the Development of Indigenous Communication

Mass media have come to stay in the dependent nations as observed by scholars. On this, Uche (1988:20) unfolds that, "Presently, Third World developing nations have no challenge to pose as an alternative to check Western cultural dominance, through information technologies, based on the existing realities in their framework in policy formulation and implementation." Uche maintains that the dependent nations have found themselves at the mercy of the developed societies who are the producers of the communication hardware.

Speaking in the same vein, another scholar, Ansah (1988:27) also resigns to fate in the acceptance of mass media by the dependent countries. He submits:

> If the developing countries could easily shut themselves off from such cultural products, an easier or more effective solution would have been found to the problem, but they simply cannot, because the phenomenal development and application of science and technology which have made possible the rapid advance in mass communication cannot be halted... It is a reality to be faced and coped with.

Salawu (2005) agrees with earlier scholars that the foreign media may not be rejected by the developing nations but urged the people to accept their culture and values, the neglect of which he attributed to the foreign dominance. The scholar maintains that if the developing nations appreciate their cultures, the mass media may be used as a vehicle to perpetrate and perpetuate them. Despite the fact that Ansah accepts the 'cultural bondage' into which the dependent nations are subjected, he believes that there is a way out. He posits:

> ... with the limited resources at their disposal, Third World countries can do much more to reduce their cultural dependency by a more systematic and rational utilization of the human and material mass communication resources available to them than most of them are doing or are willing to admit. (Ansah, 1988:21-22).

Also, Uche, L.U. proffers a way out of the cultural imperialism of the industrialized countries on the developing nations by advising the government of the developing nations to use the electronic media to their advantages. He emphasizes:

> Government in the media dependent countries or peripheral countries will increasingly get involved in media ownership, especially in the

area of electronic media, solely to protect what remains of their national interests, cultural identity, and preservation of their territorial integrity and the indivisibility of their nations (Uche, 1988:22).

African media practitioners and scholars have, in the recent times, in a bid to 'endure what cannot be cured', attempted to conjoin traditional and mass communication for development purposes. One of such scholars is Soola (1999:32) who insists that "There is thus the need for a synergistic media — mix approach to communication in the development calculus." In his study, Soola synergizes traditional and modern communication for effective environmental awareness and finds out that, "for complementarity and maximum impact, both the print and electronic, as well as traditional media will need to act in synergy in creating and promoting environmental awareness" (Ibid.42). Also, Akpabio (2003:7) synergizes the traditional and the modern communication in a study entitled, "Communicating AIDS to the Rural Populace" and finds out that the outcome "results in greater mileage."

A careful observation of the views of scholars above may not be unconnected with the government and private media in the developing nations' strive to use mass communication as a development strategy for their traditional media, as we shall examine in Africa Independent Television (An) and Radio Lagos 107.5 FM in this study.

## Theory of Development Communication

It is important to locate this paper within a particular theory. Therefore, the theory that best suits the study is the theory of development communication. The theory of development communication does not belong to the first generation of theories propounded to divide the world's press. According to Siebert *et.al* cited in Severin and Tankard (2001), the first generation theories are: authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and Soviet - totalitarian theories. However, in another study by Folarin (1998), two other communication theories are identified by McQuail (1987). They are democratic participant and development media theories. All the six press theories above are regarded as the normative theories of the press. In his explanation of normative theory of the press, Folarin (1998:19) expresses:

> Normative theory seeks to locate media structure and performance within the milieu in which it operates ... Normative theory helps to explain the ways in which societal communication rules impinge on mass media structure, conventions and performance, and highlights the consequences of non-convergence between societal communication principles and mass communication principles.

Folarin further notes that the development media theory is an offshoot of the Soviet-Communist theory which itself is an offshoot of the authoritarian media theory. On the other hand, democratic participant theory is an evolution of social responsibility theory, which is also a transformation of libertarian theory. The need to meet up a deficiency in one theory has led to another. The development media theory, according to Folarin:

> ... relates specifically to media structure and performance in the developing countries. It encompasses a great variety of socio cultural, economic and political conditions which, however, tend to converge in a primary concern to use the media for development purposes (Folarin, 1998:34).

Folarin sums up, referring to McQuail (1987), the major tenets of development media theory as follows: (i) media must accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy (ii) freedom of the media should be open to economic priorities and development needs of the society (iii) media should give priority in their content to the national culture and language(s) (iv) media should give priority in news and information to link with other developing countries which are close geographically, culturally or politically; (v) journalists and other media workers have responsibilities as well as freedom in their information gathering and dissemination tasks (vi) in the interest of development ends, the state has a right to intervene in, or restrict, media operation; and devices of censorship, subsidy and direct control can be justified.

Folarin notes that McQuail failed to see the problem of internal colonialism, i.e. the smashing of local and/or regional cultures and languages. Folarin also suggests that 'national' media should give priority in their content to the national macro-culture in so far as this can be abstracted from the national milieu; then to regional cultures and then to local cultures, all in a descending order of priority. Second, that 'regional' media should accord priority to regional cultures and languages and also that 'local' media should give priority to local cultures. However, Folarin fails to provide a clear operational definition of what he meant by 'national', 'regional' and 'local' media as this may be difficult in a nation like Nigeria with multiethnic and multilingual background. Folarin, however, condemns the continuous use of "a basically alien language" (Ibid.39) by the Nigerian journalists in both print and broadcast media "even after well over a century of the importation of Anglo-American language and journalism into the country" (Ibid.39). The scholar is also unhappy that indigenous language journalism in print and electronic media is yet to receive any significant scholarly attention.

## Methodology

This section discusses the methods used in data gathering and analysis. It presents the sampling procedure, research design, validity and reliability of the instruments.

## Research Design

The content analysis method was employed so that the researcher could adequately measure indigenous media in each of the selected programmes. The content analysis method was considered appropriate because the study focused on the use of indigenous media in the selected broadcasting stations. The research question, which formed the basis of the instrument for this investigation, is: what aspects of the African cultural heritage are transmitted in the programme of these stations?

## Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

The simple random sampling technique was deemed fit and used for the selection of sample for the content analysis. In doing this, the researcher identified all the indigenous media programmes in. each of the broadcast stations. A ballot system was also adopted in picking five programmes from each of the stations. From Africa Independent Television (A.IT), the following programmes were selected — 'African Stories', 'Goge Africa', 'Mìnìjọ̀jọ̀', 'Ṣọkọyọkọ̀tọ̀' and 'Fuji House of Commotion' while from Radio Lagos 107.5 FM, we selected: 'Ẹwẹ̀so', 'Ọ̀gẹgèlè', 'Ìsẹ̀sẹ', 'Ojútáyé' and 'Amúlùúdùn'. The following content categories are used: ideology, technology and organization and were termed aspects of African cultural heritage.

The simple random sampling method was equally adopted in selecting the episodes that were finally analyzed in this study. We collated fifty-two episodes from each of the programmes, each for both the radio and television stations for the twelve months of January to December 2016, which formed the population of the study. We now adopted a ballot system in picking one episode from each of the ten programmes. In all, we analyzed ten episodes.

Rationale for Selection of Programmes.

Although indigenous media manifested in intrapersonal, interpersonal and group communication in indigenous African societies, it has in recent times manifested in mass media probably to save it from extinction. To make the research comprehensive, therefore, programmes were selected from both the radio and television media — Radio Lagos 107.5 FM and Africa Independent Television (AlT). The following programmes were selected:

'African Stories', 'Goge Africa', 'Mìnìjọ̀jọ̀', 'Ṣọkọyọkọ̀tọ̀' and 'Fuji House of Commotion'; 'Ẹwẹ̀so', 'Ọ̀gẹgèlè', 'Ìsẹ̀sẹ', 'Ojútáyé' and 'Amúlùúdùn'.

The transmission of the social heritage of a people is a major function of the mass media as said earlier in this paper according to Severin and Tankard (2001). The programmes were therefore selected from media houses that claimed to be performing this function.

## Instruments

The research instruments employed in this study were the questionnaire, interview schedule and content analysis categories.

## Content Categories

The content of ten episodes of the ten programmes selected from both media stations chosen was analyzed. For the content categories that were used for analysis, we referred to Madubuike (2003). It includes ideology, which is the culture component that includes belief systems, values, ideas and knowledge; technology, which is the culture component that includes arts and skills; organization, which is the culture component that includes greeting patterns, system of right and duties and behavioral patterns.

## Unit of Analysis

Wimmer and Dominick (1987:174) described the unit of analysis as "the thing that is actually counted. It is the smallest element of a content analysis, but it is also one of the most important." In this study, the units of analysis were: arts and skills, systems of rights and duties, behavioral patterns, belief systems, values, ideas and knowledge. For the analysis of the indigenous media and the African cultural values in the selected programmes, we used frequency method for the data collected through the content analysis. The data were coded in simple percentages and were presented in tables and charts (where necessary).

## Research Question

What aspect(s) of the African cultural heritage (is) are transmitted in the programmes of these stations?

## Ideology

This is one of the three major divisions of culture in any community. It is also called the mental component of culture. According to Madubuike (2003:6), ideological component of culture includes "the belief systems, values, ideas and knowledge." Analysis revealed that all the ten (100%) programmes in this study portrayed ideology as an element of African cultural heritage.

In 'African Stories', the presenter demonstrated an ideology of moral standard of behaviour. This was revealed in a folktale entitled, 'Ọmọ́yẹni and Ọmọ́dẹ̀tẹ́' (child befits one and child brings shame to one). The two

major characters in the said folktale exhibited virtues and vices. Ọmọ́yẹni exhibited virtues, and was rewarded; while Ọmọ́dẹ̀tẹ́ exhibited vices, and was consequently punished. In 'Goge Africa', African ideology manifested in the display of masquerades. Idowu (1973:185) asserts that the Africans' belief in the ancestors manifests in their worship of masquerades. In 'Mìnìjojọ̀', the Yorùbá's belief in 'Ògún' by hunters was revealed. In 'Ṣọ̀kọyọ̀kọ̀tọ̀', the belief that a woman who knew how to prepare tasty and delicious meals had prevented her husband from marrying another woman was unveiled. In 'Fuji House of Commotion', African ideology of polygamy was displayed with its attendant problems like poverty and jealousy. In 'Ẹ̀wẹ̀so', the belief of the Ìjẹ̀bú dialect of Yorùbá in 'Ẹ̀lúkú', a pantheon was revealed in their praise-poetry. In 'Ọ̀gẹgèlè', women were presented as gossips. The Yorùbá's belief in Olódùmarè manifested in 'Ojútáyé'. The programme also revealed the immeasurable love that children have for their mothers, saying, *Òrìṣà bí ìyá kòsí* (no divinity can be as good as mother). In 'Amúlùúdùn', the belief of the Yorùbá in reincarnation was presented. A man was brought to the programme who narrated his experiences as a reincarnated being.

## Technology

This is the second subdivision of culture. It is also known as material culture. It consists of the products of man's creative abilities; his arts and skills used to produce material goods and services for livelihood and security. This cultural aspect is necessary for the survival of the society since no society can survive without meeting its basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing. Also, we referred to Madubuike (2003) in this classification. All the ten (100%) programmes we analyzed in this study reflected technology as an element of culture. In 'African Stories', paintings, sculptures and mats were presented. Sculptures were also displayed in 'Goge Africa'. In 'Mìnìjojọ̀', hunting was presented as a skill of the Yorùbá people. Cooking was demonstrated in Ṣọ̀kọyọ̀kọ̀tọ̀ while sculptures were seen in 'Fuji House of Commotion'. Fishing was presented in 'Ẹ̀wẹ̀so', shelter was seen in 'Ọ̀gẹgèlè' while boat regatta manifested in 'Ìsẹ̀ṣe'. However, the art of using the Yorùbá talking drums to communicate was presented in 'Ojútáyé' while in 'Amúlùúdùn', shelter was seen.

## Organization

This is the third subdivision of culture according to Madubuike (2003). It is also known as the social culture. It involves social action by which daily intercourse between individuals in a society occurs. This is because no society can survive without interrelationships or group cooperation. Organizational

component of culture involves such activities as greeting patterns, systems of right and duties, behavioral patterns, feelings etc. Also, all the ten (100%) programmes analyzed in this study exhibited organizational component of culture. In 'African Stories', the presenter educated the children, using folktales. Also, African behavioral pattern of using proverbs to express their feelings was displayed. In 'Goge Africa', dancing patterns of various parts of African countries were shown. Sexual restriction among relations was presented in 'Mìnìjojo' while the greeting pattern of the Yorùbá people was displayed in 'Ṣọkọyọkọtọ'. In 'Fuji House of Commotion', the communal life of the African people was exhibited.

In 'Ẹwèso', the hospitality nature of the Yorùbá people was presented. 'Ọ̀gẹgèlè' revealed that African people were grateful to their helpers. In 'Ìsèṣe', singing, dancing and the communal nature of the people were displayed. In 'Ojútáyé', listeners were educated through riddles; and in 'Amúlùúdùn', singing and dancing patterns of the Yorùbá people were presented.

The analysis above is presented in the table below:

**Summary of african cultural values present in the programmes**

| S/N | Programmes | Content categories | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Ideology | Technology | Organization |
| | African Stories | + | + | + |
| | Goge Africa | + | + | + |
| | Mìnìjòjò | + | + | + |
| | Ṣọkọyọ̀kọ̀tọ̀ | + | + | + |
| | Fuji House of Commotion | + | + | + |
| | Ẹ̀wèso | + | + | + |
| | Ọ̀gẹgèlè | + | + | + |
| | Ìsèṣe | + | + | + |
| | Ojútáyé | + | + | + |
| | Amúlùúdùn | + | + | + |

KEY: + Present; − Absent

## Conclusion

In this paper, we investigated the coverage of African cultures by broadcast stations, using content analysis on ten programmes of Radio Lagos 107.5F and Africa Independent Television (AIT). The research revealed that all the programmes explored featured various kinds of African cultures, traditions, norms and principles which validated the claims of the two stations in the propagation of African cultures.

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