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Facilitating Access to Artworks by Print Media Industry in the Age of Digital Communication

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Abstract:

This paper is a review of literature that discusses how print media industry can facilitate access to artworks for utilization, particularly in rehabilitation/reformation centers, rest/orphanage homes, hospitals and institutions of learning. Artworks contribute significantly to human well-being. Artworks exist as a universal human language and serve not only for entertainment and aesthetic purposes but also for increasing understanding of ourselves and the world around us. For instance, the display of artworks in our communities can help to bring about social changes and economic development. Equally, artworks have vital impact on individual self-managed development. But documented evidence shows that there is difficulty in accessing artworks in aforementioned places for utilization. This has contributed to the prevalent economic crises and variety of mental health needs, social and emotional difficulties related to disabilities in our society which could have been resolved by utilizing artworks and art therapy. This study discusses how print media industry can facilitate access to artworks where they are needed in this age of digital communication toward addressing some of these social and health related problems. It also notes that the academy – industry cooperation mechanism can build a databank for digital content which could be used for reproduction and dissemination of artworks. The paper concludes that academy – industry cooperation mechanism is vital to facilitating access to artworks for utilization in the health, education, and industry sectors and can also be a source for generating revenue through tourism and consumer purchases.

Keywords: *Facilitating, artworks, Print Media Industry, digital Communication*

1. Introduction

Artworks generally are products of human activity aimed at stimulating thoughts and emotions. They are aesthetics expressions meant to be shared with others to achieve the purpose for which they were made (Bucher, 2010). They are produced and perceived based on different purposes of production. Artworks essentially are products that communicate, entertain and educate, they can be used for art therapy, propaganda and political changes among others. Sarkar (2013), considers artworks to have emotional subjective synthesis. And Al-Radaideh (2013) in his opinion, asserted that “artworks are all around us - explaining, decorating, identifying, and imposing meanings on the world”. If this is so, it then means that artworks do deeply create in us emotional responses that have different consequences either positively or negatively. Thus, without artworks, which according to Sarkar, that has universal appeal and a message that moves us deeply or awakens us to new insights into human nature, our world would have been completely void, dull and quite uninteresting. Gilbert and McCarter (1995) pointed out that artworks are basically human expressions intended to communicate. Artworks (painting, sculptures, print makings and drawings) in this paper refers to the “visual arts” which according to Blunden (2005) are man-made artifacts that could be imitated.

Imitation is basic to human existence since man right from inception has been imitating nature (representational or naturalistic images) to make his environment worth living. Quite unfortunately, access to these artworks is never easy. For these reasons, artists have to organize exhibitions where their works could be displayed for people as well as other artists, but this is only for the few privileged. According to Dissanayake (1992), artworks are inseparable tenets in the lives of both the old and the young as they can educate, bring love and care, heal, communicate and socialize. This is an indicative to the fact that artworks should be made accessible to all that deserve to have, hence signifying that print media industry has an important role to play in this process.

Print media industry is a manufacturing industry that utilizes different processes to create, develop, produce and disseminate products having words and/or pictorial images meant to convey messages. This can be achieved by mechanical and/or digital reproduction processes. With artworks, they have to first, be digitized and then processed before printing. Digitization now is making public libraries, archives and institutions of learning to start transiting from being guardians and service providers of print collections to

providing services of both print and electronic resource materials. This transition is the digital conversion of analogue visual materials into electronic form to make them accessible on the web so that they become an integral part of larger information environment. This process of digitization is being embarked upon for documentation of artworks as cultural heritage for preservation and commercialization. According to Hsieh (2007), many countries are devoting time to digitizing their cultural treasures and heritage not only for preservation, exchange and sharing but also for the utilization of the content into learning and teaching databases, publications and other purpose. This can be a good project for every country particularly Nigeria considering its rich cultural heritage where such treasures could be digitized and reproduced to make them accessible for utilization hence the study - facilitating access to artworks by print media industry in the age of digital communication. This study specifically discussed on how to:

- reproduce artworks and make it easily accessible to the intended beneficiaries in the society
- build a databank of artworks in digital form for digital communication
- develop academy-industry co-operation mechanism for the promotion of artwork activities among the artists and the academia

2. Digital Reproduction Technologies

There are diverse artworks and so are the artists. And as many as the artworks created for many different functions and purposes in different cultures and times (Herberholz & Herberholz, 1990), there is no single digital reproduction technology and technique that can adequately meet all the requirements for the reproduction of varieties of these artworks. They require different digital reproduction technologies to reproduce them. These digital reproduction technologies include printers, scanners, digital cameras, computer systems, image setters and appropriate software and printing machines. These reproduction technologies differ in their abilities to reproduce colours and do have different built-in reproduction capacities, therefore there is need to complement each other in the process of reproducing artworks. For instance, scanners are used to convert analogue photographs to digital format to enable the computer process the data for outputting on the substrate by the appropriate printing machine(s). However, where digital cameras are employed in shooting scenes, scanners are not needed since cameras captured data digitally and output same into the computer system for processing. Similarly, the quality of the image captured by the digital camera depends so much on the quality of the camera and the prevailing light conditions since the same camera can make varying quality of digital images under different light conditions. Thus cameras, scanners, and monitors capture colours differently. For this reason and other reproduction variables, it becomes necessary for the use of colour management systems (CMS) to control the colour variations in the different digital reproduction technologies. CMS, digital reproduction technologies and their appropriate software are basic requirements for reproducing high print quality for utilization. Artworks need to first, be digitized and processed before printing takes place. Digitization is the process of capturing and breaking down into digital dots the analogue image. Figure 1 is a schematic process of digital artwork reproduction and distribution.

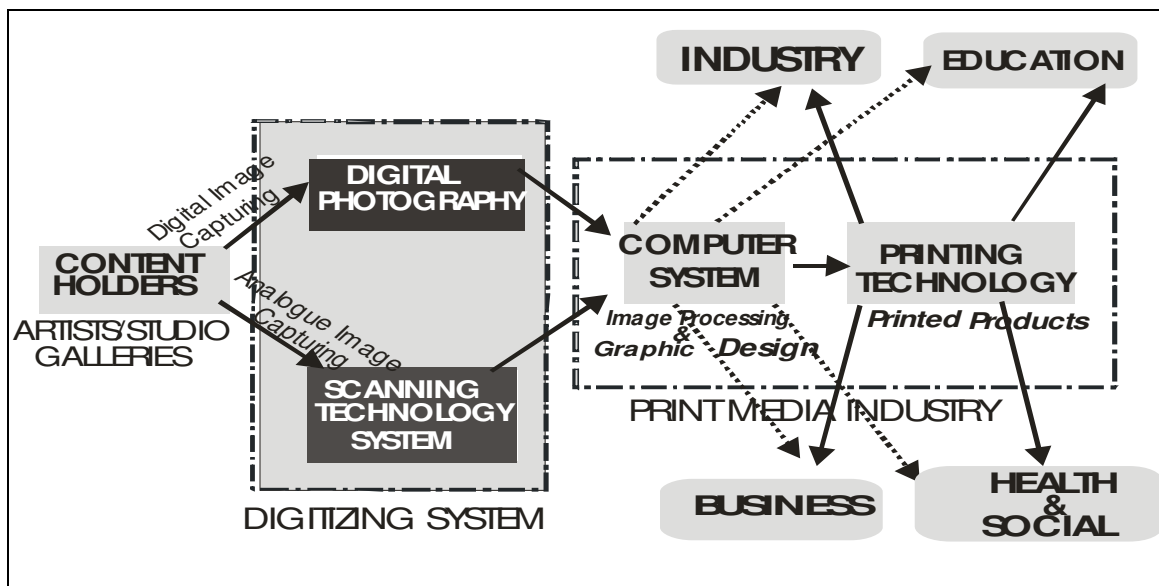


Figure 1: The Schema of Digitization of Artwork, Printing, Publishing and Distribution

The reproduction of artworks is quite an age-long technology, started by the Greeks. The Greeks used founding and stamping to produce bronzes and coins (Blunden, 2005). This crude technology was replaced by an advanced mechanical reproduction such as printing machines when artworks were printed on different surfaces including wood, metal, glass and other flexible materials apart from the main substrate which is paper. But, the development of reproduction technologies in the age of digital revolution has enhanced the reproduction of print media where artworks are reproduced and disseminated using different media and could be in hard or soft format. Kenney and Reiger (2000), pointed out that, digital technologies and the ever increasing popularity of network access have irrevocably changed the information distribution landscape. The internet has significantly enhanced the process of print media

information dissemination across the space and therefore makes distance not a limiting factor again. The information and communication technologies have made the print media industry and the printers to become information providers. Figure 2 shows how print industry can provide different types of information to print consumers.

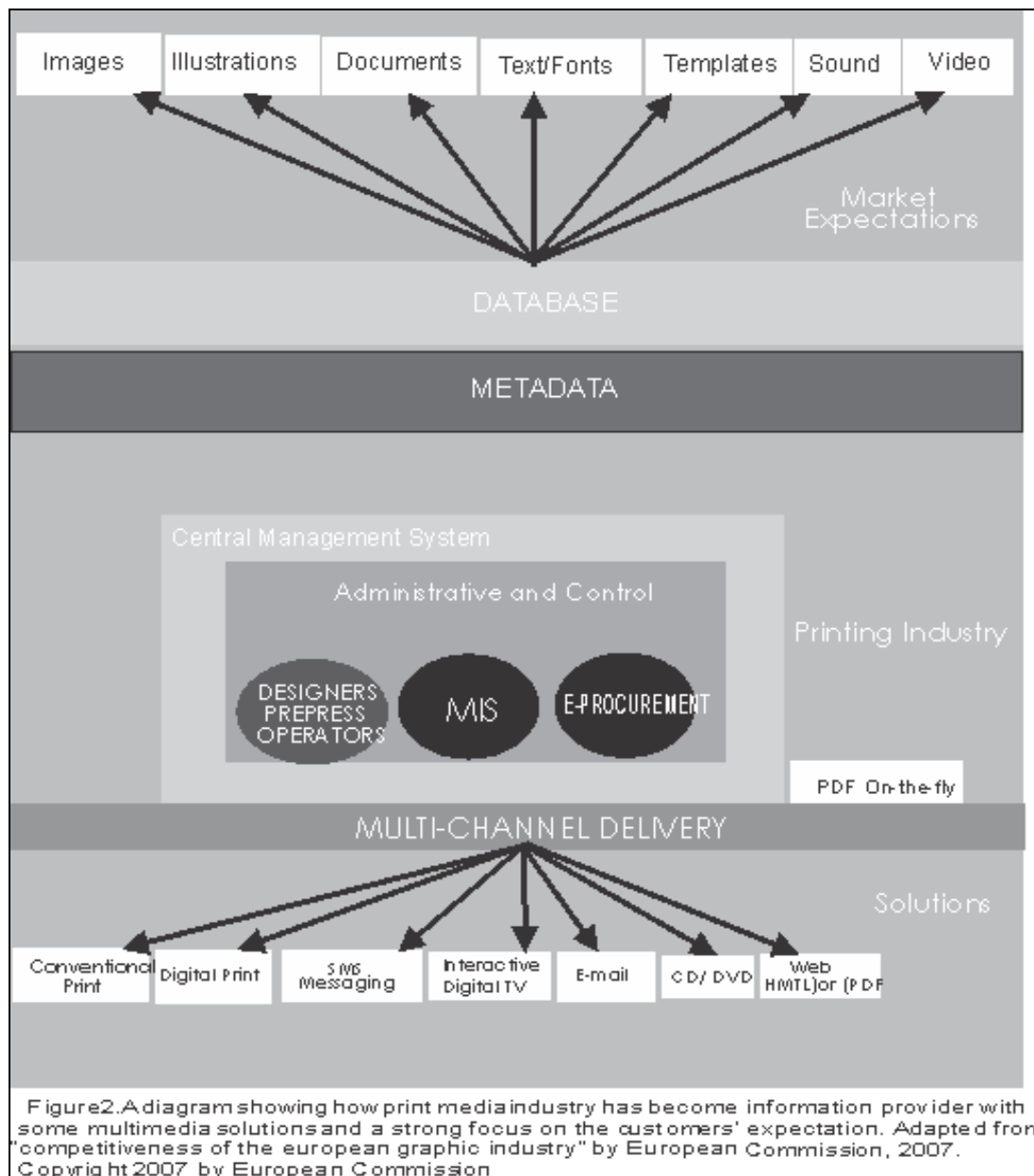


Figure 2

Therefore, with these technologies, it requires only the understanding and co-operation of artists and the print media industry to make available artistic productions where they are needed. Print media industry could play a significant role in this aspect. Print industry has long been described as the industry that serve an urban patriciate as a "divine art" and humble folk as a "poor man's friend" (Blunden, 2007 in Eisenstein, 1968). It is certain that, print media will continue to play this role in human life for years to come. Literature have it that learning by doing became more sharply distinguished from learning by reading when print media especially (books) were made available to individuals, courtesy of printing industry. Therefore, print media as repositories of knowledge-based information, its access and utilization could promote intellectual ability toward national development that can affect a wide socio-economic and technological spectrum of human endeavour. This is why it becomes necessary to facilitate access to artworks by print media industry. Documented evidence had shown that thousands of artworks are decaying in many art studios/workshops around the globe. This has rendered the effort of the artists to become a waste and the purpose for self-expression woefully defeated. This wasteful effort could be minimized through artists – print media industry cooperation to digitize, reproduce and distribute reproduced artworks for utilization in the following areas:

3. Education – (Teaching & Learning)

Print has been in the fore-front of facilitating teaching and learning. According to Wamalwa and Wamalwa (2014), the development of printing set the stage for a literary-based mode of teaching which emphasizes on the preservation of knowledge, promotion of abstract and analytical thought. Print media industry makes access to instructional media easier which promotes scholarly works in institutions of learning. Merely lecturing or talking about artists' works in our classrooms impact less than providing and using visual instructional media. Visual instructional media used in teaching and learning create longer lasting experience and relate readily to other sensory experiences, Wamalwa and Wamalwa have noted.

Print instructional media are strong instruments for transformation of mind through learning by reading and doing. Certainly, human up-bringing and schooling are significantly affected by the printed image. Print Visuals when employed in the teaching and learning process in the early childhood and adulthood, stimulates interest, sustains interest and clarifies facts and information easily and precisely – thus giving meaning to words (Wamalwa & Wamalwa, 2014). Therefore, the establishment of mutual co-operation between the print media industry and the artists will provide a platform where artworks could be reproduced and make accessible to both students and teachers for better artistic academic pursuits. This cooperation will lead to developing a common front of communities of art teachers and students for better learning and teaching that will enhance students' performances for excellent academic achievement in artworks.

This can be a valuable relationship not only for promoting academic pursuits and research works but also for the promotion of strong ideals in artwork practices among the artists. This promotes both individualism and uniformity in performing greater artworks that will uplift the development of appropriate sectors of the society. Thus increasing and encouraging artwork literacy, consumption and spreading as well as promoting greater sense of cultural heritage and development.

4. Business Environment – Merchandise and E-Commerce

For business environment to function in the promotion of sales of artworks, print media industry must legally obtain the copyright of the artworks prior to reproduction. The digitization and reproduction must be with full understanding and permission of the authors. It is a collaboration that will clearly states its vision, mission as well as the policies of the participating members. Once the objects have been digitized, they can be in databank. With this, it makes it possible to have artworks view online in super high-resolution, showing every details one needs to see and know. Gamboa (2014) reported that there are good number of projects currently on course in some countries to help in the dissemination of artworks reach the publics. These projects, according to the author, include Google Art Project, Artsy.com, Amazon Art, Artside and some Phone Apps.

The purpose is to reproduce artworks and make them accessible to vendors for sales online. Tully (2013) opined that, since sites selling art online are unencumbered by the physical infrastructure of the traditional gallery or auction house, they can also make their commissions lower and the whole business of buying artworks much cheaper and more accessible. Currently, there are online purchasing and bidding systems that have network for artists to sell their product (Hsieh, Wu & Lee, 2006). For instance, big auction houses such as Christie's and Sotheby's online bidding has brought in a number of new bidders thereby expanding the business of online sales of artworks (Gamboa, 2014). This expansion brings more sales and promotion of artworks globally. For example, a report from IBIS World published in July 2013 estimated that the online art sales industry in the U.S alone is worth about \$835.4million in 2013 alone. This is a window of good business opportunity especially for African Countries particularly, Nigeria given the diverse cultural activities to begin establishing similar virtual sites (Websites) for sales of rich artworks which are important to states' economies. They provide direct economic benefits to states and communities thus creating jobs, attract investments, generate revenues and stimulate local economies through tourism and consumer purchases.

The purpose is for the print media industry through its reproduction technologies produce and display high-quality visual images of artworks that gives enough confidence to buyers that what they are purchasing actually looks exactly as what they have seen on print or online.

Everett (2013) pointed out that websites allow online visitors to zoom into and examine details of such artworks (painting, sculptures, photographs, prints), get multiple views of a three-dimensional works and even the video of such multimedia prior to making their decisions of purchase.

5. Industry

The Print Media Industry through digital reproduction and communication technologies provides a platform for artists to promote artistic production in print and electronic forms. This is where the print media industry embarks on massive digitization and storage of contents and reproducing new products for specific online marketing. The industry-academic cooperation mechanism on this perspective is for storage of massive digital contents of artworks that can be licensed for business/commercial purposes. The idea is to provide access to digitized artworks to the publics online and not until exhibitions are organized or when one gets to the studios/galleries before accessing such artworks.

It is a forum where artists provide artworks for digitization and licensing for commercial purposes. Embarking on this venture, artworks could be exposed to the public not through exhibitions but through the e-commerce derived from the digital reproduction of the artworks (Hsieh, 2007). This enables the exposure of artworks to the public as well as facilitating access to the digital artistic contents to consumers.

6. Health and Social Sectors

These are institutions created for solving human health problems through many ways by people who are trained to handle such health disorders. One of such ways is the use of artworks, art therapy and producing artworks. Artworks, as visual images with messages are meant to communicate to certain group of people to convince, inspire, persuade or express certain ideas, feelings, etc. about the society or an event. Empirical studies have shown that artworks are dominant factors in human social settings – politics, religious, health, and education (Magniant, 2004, Poole, 2011, Lin, 2007; Gamboa, 2014 & Blunden, 2005). For example, art therapy according to Finley (2013), is based on the belief that the creative process involved in artistic self-expression helps people to resolve conflicts and problems, develop interpersonal skills, manage behavior, reduce stress, increase self-esteem, self-awareness and achieve insight. Furthermore, with individuals of all ages, art therapy is used to treat a variety of mental health needs, social and emotional difficulties related to disability and illness, and psychosocial difficulties related to medical illness.

British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT), 2014] views art therapy as a form of psychotherapy that uses visual art media as its primary mode of communication. This is an indicative of the fact that engagement in the artistic production widens and strengthens social bonds which also improves health status of an individual (Guetzkow, 2002 in Ball & Keating, 2002). Therefore, accessibility to artworks is very important and is valuable to human life. Magniant (2004), discussing on the significant value of artworks, pointed out that a visit to the artwork studios provides one with a collage impression: warm welcome, laughter, patient attention, excitement ..., it is this artistic and creative expression that enlivens a given place or an event with continuing human care facilities. According to the author, the use of artworks in art therapy can help distance the problem, feeling or memory, put it on the paper, and let the metaphor of the artwork communicates. Quite unfortunately, observations reveal that many of these health institutions, particularly in Nigeria have little or no regard for the metaphor of the artwork that communicates particularly in the reformation centres and inmate institutions. This necessitated the need to facilitate access to artworks to such places particularly the hospitals, recreation, reformation and rehabilitation centres as well as orphanage and rest homes.

Commenting on the use of artworks and art therapy, Wehrmacher in Magninat (2004) said, art provides expert evidence – supplementing conventional symptoms and physical signs – for the diagnosis, prognosis, staging and treating mental disorders. Nonetheless, it remains under-used and under recognized by physicians, nurses and technicians”. It is under-recognized most likely because accessibility to artworks has been difficult and art therapists are not on ground in most of these institutions.

This unfortunate situation can be minimized by providing appropriate artworks and art therapy in these various institutions. This is why facilitating access to artworks by print media industry is necessary particularly in our developing countries where health care delivery system is grossly inadequate. Therefore, accessing these artworks where they serve as resources for art therapy handle by the professionals will restore the health of persons suffering from either mental disorder or ill-health problems. This application of artworks and art therapy will help restore their health and make them normal human beings in the society again particularly in the treatment of people with mental and intellectual disabilities. Reproduced artworks (print media) are visuals that can be effectively utilized in the hospitals and reformation centers to create awareness and fight against some ailments. A collaborative effort between the relevant artists, print media industry and the health institutions to make appropriate artworks for utilization in these institutions will help solve some of these ill-health cases and restore normalcy in some mental disordered persons in the society.

7. Conclusion

A collaborated and legally established academy – industry cooperation mechanism between the print media industry and practicing artists will no doubt makes accessibility to artworks much easier. This collaborative mechanism will facilitate access to utilization of artworks which will impact greatly on human lives particularly for those in the hospitals, rehabilitation and reformation centres, education and on the economy generally by creating jobs, attract investments and generate revenues through tourism and consumer purchases. It is therefore not out of place for public libraries, archives, museum and monuments and institutions of learning to come to terms with print media institutions to kick start this important life saving and economic development project in our society.

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