

# THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

## Is Digital Culture A Threat to Indigenous Communication? : A Critical Look at Emerging Trends in the Global Platforms

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### **Abstract**

*The ubiquitous digital media technologies in this information age has entrenched a digital culture in our world today. Indeed, digital media have become increasingly more affordable and accessible to users all over the world that the global culture has become more homogeneous than McLuhan ever envisioned in his global village postulation. The obvious implication of this development is a palpable threat to intercultural communication and the indigenous communication patterns of the developing countries of the world, like Nigeria, whose cultures are obviously at the receiving end of the emerging trends in globalization. This paper interrogates the threat of digital culture on indigenous communication with a critical appraisal of emerging trends in the global platforms. Anchored on Technological Determinism and Cultural Imperialism theories, the paper adopted Critical Qualitative Research method to analyze the major benefits and challenges that digital culture throws at indigenous communication in Nigeria. The paper found that much as the digital media have changed global communication pattern with a lot of opportunities for nations of the world to interact more freely; digital culture is striking a heavy blow on the indigenous cultures of indigenous communities in developing countries who are not only caught up in the challenge of digital divide, slow adaptation of technology and other factors that are still keeping their indigenous communication channels at the periphery. The paper recommends that since indigenous communication channels cannot develop at the same rate with the Western media, indigenous communities in the developing nations should preserve and promote their indigenous communication so as to maintain their cultural identity in the face of the globalizing trend of the digital culture.*

**Keywords:** Digital culture, indigenous communication, emerging trends, globalization, global platforms

### **1. Introduction**

Human communication, from age to age, is shaped by the predominant technological model of that age. From the Stone Age when communication was largely face-to-face, oral culture held sway as the means of communication. Each indigenous community in every nation has its traditional or local means of communication that is known to them. Indigenous communication modes include: the folklore, songs, dance, artifacts, idiophones and other basic local resources that are used to share meanings. What is obtainable in one community may not easily be found in another community; hence each group employs its own specific mode or channels of communication. The emergence of the print age, following Gutenberg's printing press, gave birth to the printed word which changed communication landscape from oral culture to reading culture, and the print media flourished.

However, the emergence of the broadcast media gave rise to the electronic culture where audio-visual communication between and among people of different nations and regions of the world became swifter that distance was no longer a barrier for people in different parts of the world to share ideas. This development so fascinated humanity that Marshall McLuhan postulated that the world has become a global village setting where everyone can interact closely with one another (McLuhan, 1964). Today, information and communication technology has advanced more that the world is in the digital age where communication has become more interactive, speedier, and more democratic in what is widely referred to as the digital culture.

What these developments imply is that the process of human communication has continued to advance and transform with the evolving technology of each age. The 21<sup>st</sup> century world has been aptly described as the information age where the global citizens yearn for information, and also access information from a variety of digital media platforms at their own time and in their own way. People are largely influenced by the variety of digital media technologies that are available to them. Digital Technology, according to Miller (2011) represents information in numerical numbers as Web 2.0 in a modifiable and compressible format. The emergence of digital technology, powered by the internet has thrown up a

widespread use of digital media such as the computer, smart phones, laptop, blogs, websites, and the social media which has globally created a digital culture that is now creating a pervasive influence on indigenous communication and culture. With the increasing accessibility and affordability of digital media, the digital audiences are now more networked, collaborative and participatory in the way they share information and communication (Miller, 2011)

The digital media have not only altered the mode and process of human communication, they are more audience oriented as they facilitate a connection and interaction with the audience in a new way that was not previously possible. Communication with the digital media allows and builds social relationships between the sender and the receiver which has invariably enhanced the wide acceptability of the social media, as the opportunity for an immediate feedback is guaranteed. The digital media equally enhanced user generated content (UGC) which has increasingly blurred the boundaries between senders and receivers (Asemah, 2011). The traditional journalists in the print or electronic age are no longer the sole custodians of the media message because the users or the media audience with their smart phones can create media content and disseminate or share such contents with others through the internet and the social media. Again, with the digital media in this digital culture, distance among people in any part of the world has become blurred as ideas, messages and all manner of information can easily be shared among and between the global digital citizens with the speed of lightening. Consequently global communication platform today with the attendant new forms of communication is shaped by the digital culture with a variety of emerging trends that constitute huge threats to indigenous communication. The way people relate and interact has also changed tremendously that everyone everywhere is relating easily and swiftly in the available global platforms.

However, indigenous or traditional communication remains an important and effective means of transmitting messages to people living in small towns and communities where modern mass media cannot reach (Quaint, 2018). This local channel of communication is culture specific because it is not only transmitted in the local language of the specific indigenous group, it also embodies the totality of the people's culture, hence, it is easily accessible to the people. They are simple to learn and they are transmitted from one generation to another, orally. This is quite different from the trendy digital communication media which requires literacy in foreign language, digital skill and internet connectivity to access. Indigenous communication also thrives in rural communities where communication is predominantly oral in nature, unlike the digital media that are technologically based. The relevance of the indigenous communication platform, despite the emerging trends in the social media for the local rural communities cannot be over emphasized because that is still the people's major means of information exchange till date. Owuamalam (2016) says that a community is identified by the closeness of people in an identifiable manner, where people in the community know themselves, their respective families and villages.

The emergence of the digital media have entrenched a wide range of easy means of communication that has enhanced social interactions, especially through the social media open to everyone in the global platform. This, no doubt, raises some fears about the viability and survival of the indigenous communication which are erroneously seen as obsolete, ancient, archaic, and traditional means of communication which no doubt, remains a part and parcel of what defines any indigenous people. Thus, to preserve the cultural diversity and identity of indigenous peoples of the world in the face of globalizing trends, the impact of the digital culture needs to be critically analysed so as to clearly understand the nature of the threat it poses to the survival of indigenous communication and how such threats can be averted. This is the task which this paper intends to unravel. The researchers intend to take a critical look at the emerging trends in the global platforms and their influence on the indigenous communication.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

In our march to modernity, it is important that indigenous cultures are not destroyed. Much as the world is captivated by globalization with the emergence of new media technologies that have become the trending media, leading to a digital culture where communication among the digital global citizens are now internet oriented; the instant meaning shared in the human voice with the richness of the non-verbal cues found in the face-to-face nature of indigenous communication should not be lost in the digital culture in which communication is basically technological oriented. Knowing that every community has its own unique communication culture, it becomes pertinent to critically evaluate the nature of the threat posed by the fascinating digital culture on indigenous communication for indigenous communities in the world, especially in Africa, Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa where more than half of their population still live in the rural areas where the major indices of development are lacking (UNDESA, 2011).

Also, in the developing countries where a huge chunk of their population still reside in the rural areas where poverty rate remains high, digital culture cannot thrive as majority of the citizens may be cut off by the digital divide. This paper, therefore seeks to ascertain the nature of threats faced by indigenous communication in this age of digital culture.

### 2.1. Research Objectives

This paper generally seeks to interrogate the nature of the threats faced by indigenous communication channels by the digital culture that has emerged as the trend in the global platforms. The specific objectives of the paper are to:

- Ascertain the nature of threats faced by indigenous communication by digital culture;
- Find out the emerging trends in the global platforms;
- Explain how indigenous communication can survive in the face of the threats from digital culture.

### 2.2. Research Questions

- What nature of threats does the indigenous communication face in the digital culture?

- What are the emerging trends in the global platforms?
- How can indigenous communication survive the threats it is facing from digital culture?

### 2.3. Significance of the Study

This study is significant in many ways. As digital culture is sweeping through the world and the global citizens are rapidly adapting and embracing the trend, so much of what distinguished a people especially their unique life style which is embodied in their indigenous local culture and indigenous mode of communication are being eroded. This study will establish the apparent threat that digital culture poses on indigenous communication. It will help many indigenous communities especially those of developing nations to be critical in the manner they adopt the digital culture to avoid being totally assimilated in the global popular culture. It will also help nations to seek for better approaches to preserve, protect and promote their own indigenous mode of communication so as to safeguard their cultural expressions that are critical in promoting local cultures and cultural diversity. It will also help to stimulate citizens in protecting indigenous communication model from going into extinction, while it can guide government policy formulation on indigenous communication.

However it will also enable users to understand the strengths and weaknesses of digital culture, as well as to become more media literate while adding to the gamut of literature on the impact of ICT on indigenous communication.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

This paper is guided by two communication theories: Technological Determinism and Media or Cultural Imperialism theories. Technological determinism theory as coined by an American sociologist and economist Thorstein Veblen holds that changes in technology have crucial influence on human social relations. The idea of technological determinism subsumes that the fast changing technologies shape human lives in many ways including communication. Technology is believed to be the driving force of life in a society. As technologies change with age, the nature, life style and economic relations among people also changes. This is, perhaps, why Griffin (1994) cited in Asemah (2011) opines that Marshal McLuhan's tracing of human civilization and communication in stages from tribal age, literate age, print age and the electronic age are all determined by the mode of interaction between individuals as influenced by the technology of the given age. As Asemah, Nwammuo, and Nkwam-Uwaoma (2016, p. 301) assert that technological determinism theory "explains that when new systems of technology are developed the culture or society is immediately changed to reflect the senses needed to use the new technology".

This theory is relevant to this study because it is embedded on the digital skills that are needed to access the digital media technology as against the simple local and native intelligence required to access indigenous communication which is predominately oral in nature.

Also, the place of media/cultural imperialism theory for this study lies on the nexus between communication and culture. Cultures are influenced by new technologies. Cultural imperialism theory as propounded by Herbert Schiller in 1973 holds that western nations dominate the media around the world due to their ownership and control of the mass media technology. This dominance tend to undermine or subdue the indigenous communication media of the developing countries like Nigeria and subsequently impose western cultural value on the native cultures of the developing countries (Asemah 2011, p.185) opines that "the major assumption of the media imperialism theory is that information flows from the rich information areas of the West to the developing countries (Third World countries)". The assumption of the theory is that this unilateral information flow is changing the cultural identities of the developing nations.

Another assumption of the cultural imperialism theory as noted by Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2008, p. 151) is that "humans react to what they see on television because there is nothing else to compare it to besides their own lives, usually portrayed as less than what it should be". This implies that the contents portrayed in the western advanced media tend to flood the developing countries with their culture and value system and they invariably dominate and overwhelm the local cultures of the receiving countries. The dominance of the American media hardware and software of the global media landscape is viewed as imperialistic by the developing countries in the south because a situation where the ownership, structure, distribution or content of the media in any one country are singly or together subjected to substantial external pressures from media interests of any other country or countries without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected amounts to media imperialism (Asemah, Nwammuo, Nkwam-Uwaoma 2016, p. 290).

This media or cultural imperialism theory therefore explains the obvious and palpable subjugation or threats that indigenous communication of any country faces with the onslaught of digital culture in this information society today.

### 3.1. Conceptualization of Digital Culture

The contemporary society, aptly described as the information age has remarkably changed the way people interact. Advancements in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have widened the process of communication exchange through the ICT -driven digital media leading to a world of digital culture. Digital media are characterized by online interactive, speedy, multi-media tools found in new media technologies which Nwabueze (2014, p. 163) describes as "ICT- based media which have enhanced the performance and widened the frontiers of the traditional 'old' mass media and other communication channels". They are the communication activities facilitated by the digital revolution in terms of information gathering, storage, processing and dissemination.

For McQuail (2005, p. 38) the new media defined by "their interactivity, their multiplicity of use and open-ended character and their ubiquity and delocatedness" all of which has been made possible by the increasing availability and affordability

of the internet access and the World Wide Web. Examples of the new media are found in blogs, websites, wikis and social media which are seen as ICT based communication media that have empowered the individual audience to co-create media content with professional message senders.

The new media have not only allowed the users to generate their own contents but have also transformed the social context and practices in human relation which allows on demand access to media content to users at anytime, anywhere on any digital device. Today, media consumers are free to access information using their digital devices in any platform they like. This means that the new media has succeeded in democratizing the creation, publishing, distribution and consumption of media content (Asemah 2011, p. 206). Communication and information exchange has become so transformed that countries are now more connected than was previously possible in their social, cultural, economic, and political relations. Barriers in time and space have also been side stepped due to the digital tools that allow users to connect with each other with ease in real time.

### *3.2. Emerging Trends in the Global Platforms*

The new media which is internet oriented has changed mass communication process and practice. The new media have also introduced many changes in the media landscape. What trends today in the global platform is the ubiquitous channel of communication that is internet enabled. According to Asadu (2012) the internet is an all- inclusive and interactive tool that allows everybody opportunity to drop messages and retrieve (download) an existing one. Hasan (2013, p. 768) defines the internet as “an information and communication technology network which delivers all kinds of electronic services-audio, video, text and data, to households and businesses”. This means that the internet allows users unhindered access to information and multiple means of communication. Top among the emerging trends in the media of communication on the global platform is the social media which include such social networking sites as Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, WhatsApp, Twitter, MYspace, Socialcom and so on. With internet access and a smart phone, users can access any information from diverse media and share to any site or link of their choice which was not previously possible in the traditional mass media where gatekeepers control information flow with minimal or delayed feedback.

Social media as Asadu (2012, p. 97) avers is “an electronic networking where a person gets connected to several other friends and friends of friends on the same platform”. These social friends get information and share with and among themselves despite their location. Videos, pictures, events and other ideas can be uploaded or shared among users and feedback is immediate. What this development implies is that people are at liberty to share ideas on any issue from any part of the world, including social, economic, political and religious matters. This trend no doubt can influence cultural habits, political systems and general worldviews.

Another trend that has emerged in the global platform is the capacity of the media audience to also create media contents as citizen journalists. According to Asemah (2011, p. 42) “citizen journalism also known as public participatory, democratic, guerilla or street journalism is the concept of members of the public playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information”. This is quite different from the practice where a professional journalist goes about news and information gathering and dissemination armed or guided by the ethical codes of journalism. The availability and accessibility of digital media tools with internet access has made it increasingly possible for citizen journalism to thrive in this age of digital culture through the social media.

Digital culture enthrone uncensored communication flow which may be detrimental to social harmony. Today, hate speeches and fake news have become the order of the day because the traditional media content gate keepers have been side stepped by the digital media, while the opinion leaders whose opinions counted in the good old days when indigenous communication and even the traditional mass communication thrived, are no longer strictly relied upon for information as access to information is now open and free for all with a digital media device. This trend, no doubt, poses a great danger to social harmony where the flow of information in a society is uncensored.

Despite the obvious threat that this emerging trend in the media world is posing to the professional journalists as well as the dangers their uncensored sharing of news and information poses to the public peace, citizen journalism through the social media has proven to be an invaluable 5<sup>th</sup> Estate of the realm (Newman, Duthon and Black 2012; Nwabueze, 2014). While the mainstream media or the press is widely known as the 4<sup>th</sup> estate of the realm after the first three realms- The Executive, the legislature and the Judiciary, the social media have transformed governance in many societies as citizen journalists have employed them effectively as powerful tools for social and political communication, through a widespread sensitization and awareness creation for the citizens (Nwabueze 2014). The increasing roles played by the citizen journalists in the social media have changed the public’s perceptions of socio-political events in different parts of the world. As the mainstream media practitioners go through numerous gates and check points to get the news and events of the day to the people, the citizen journalists break the news raw as it happens, unedited. This trend, no doubt, makes government and policy makers to be more accountable, knowing that some citizens somewhere could report their actions or inactions in the social media.

Closely related to citizen journalism is the User Generated Contents (UGC) now trending. Today, citizen journalists are flooding the social media which Okunna and Omenugha (2012, p. 5) describe as the “various kinds of publicly available media content that are produced by end-users”. These end-users include ordinary citizens or media audiences who were previously helpless and passive in their media use and consumption. Although these user created contents may enrich the flow of information available to the public but much of the incidents of fake news and hate speeches now causing all manner of tension in various nations of the world are largely found in the social media.

Unlike the media contents shared in the mainstream media, user generated contents are largely uncensored and uncontrolled. However, the ease and liberty with which the user generated contents are shared has made them very

popular among today's digital audience. For Okunna and Omenugha (2012, p. 51) "the free for all nature of UGC (User Generated Contents) is both its beauty and its bane". Today, everyone with digital media tool and internet access can create and share any content regardless of who gets hurt. Writing on the popularity of the UGC as an emerging trend in the global platform, Dominick (2009) fears that very soon, 70% of the world's digital data will be created by individuals and not corporations. These individuals who previously had no business or ideas about media operations can begin to command traffic through the popularity of their platforms. Bloggers and social media influencers are increasingly attracting millions of followers in their blogs and social media pages that they have become powerful forces in the socio-political developments of their society.

Also trending today is globalization which is a unidirectional and unidimensional process, driven by a western dominated global market economy that appears inimical to cultural diversity (UNESCO, 2009). Globalization is a huge threat to indigenous communication and culture because the traditional means of entertainment like cultural dances, masquerades and folk theatre are dying gradually, whereas globalised entertainment fares like pop music, European Leagues, wrestling, marathon races, boxing, sit-coms and movies from the international media are trending. The implication of this trend is cultural erosion which Farchy (2006), cited in UNESCO (2009) argues that globalization is leading to pervasive cultural homogenization and hegemonization.

Another significant emerging trend in the global platform is the convergence of the various media through the internet. Media convergence, according to Asemah (2011, p. 86) is "the process where several media channels come together to exist and operate in synergy". It is the use of a combination of different communication tools to disseminate information". Media convergence also implies the closing of distinctions or differences among media (Okunna and Omenugha, 2012). A clear example of media convergence is the adaptation and adoption of social media or online outlet by radio and television stations; the adaptation of online presence by print media houses as well as the use of a mobile phone to capture pictures, type text and upload on the internet or in any social media platform by users.

Digital culture has also resulted to a severe segmentation of the media audience. The days of targeting a mass audience by a mass medium are over. Today, the trend is to target just a segment that are or may be interested in a particular media content. What this trend implies is that the media audience in the digital culture is becoming less mass and more selective (Okunna and Omenugha, 2012). The media audiences of today are more fractionalized. They have a choice of what contents to access, and which media to use, knowing that there are multiple channels to use. The individual audience decides what to read, watch or listen to; when and how to access any media he/she chooses. This means that the audience base of any single medium is now much more reduced than was previously obtainable. This trend, thus explains why many media houses now adopt a variety of platforms to sustain and increase their audience base.

### 3.3. Indigenous Communication

Indigenous communication remains a vital means of human interaction. It is a face-to-face or an oral means of communication with the human touch that is highly personalized, which can build a close and meaningful relationship among indigenous people and cultures. Indigenous communication includes the oral or traditional media of communication which (Nwosu, 2005) say were the means of communication in many rural native or local communities before the advent of modern means of communication. They include such media as Ikoro, Ekwe, smoke signal, calabash, age grades, rituals, folk theatre, festival, palm fronds, Town criers or local newsman symbols, gun shots, nzu or the local white chalk, oja or flute, ash, masquerade, open market, community union/ town assembly or town hall meeting, also known as village square gathering etc. These are forms of media that existed in the traditional communities before the advent of western mass media. A community, according to Owuamalam (2012, p. 8) is "a group of people who are bound together due to their affinity to a common interest or course". The indigenous communication performs all the functions that mass media perform. Asemah (2011, p. 336) avers that the traditional media can be used to mobilize the people at the grassroot level for community development and national consciousness". The author adds the "traditional media also serve as a source of cultural, political, health, educational and entertainment needs of people". For instance, nzu (white chalk) in Igbo land signifies peace; palm fronds placed anywhere portends danger. Talking drums are used to summon the people for meetings, for making official announcements in the rural communities, for sacrificial ceremonies and for motivating warriors (Asemah, 2011).

Despite the rising popularity of the modern mass media and the trending digital media today, the use of indigenous communications to exchange meaning is still relevant in our contemporary world especially in rural areas which Asemah, Nkwam-Uwaoma and Tsegysu (2017, p. 22) describe as "areas in a country that are not fully developed; they are areas in a nation where you still have traditional life style that cannot be found in the urban areas or centres". In the rural areas, modern technologies and amenities that are required to access the western mass media are also lacking. In some rural communities in the developing nations, the indigenous communication channels are the only means of communication because such communities have not been influenced by modernity. In such communities, their needs for cultural exchange, education, entertainment, information sharing, mobilization and surveillance are met through their indigenous communication till date. The strengths of indigenous communication, according to Mundy and Campton (1991) cited in Nwosu (2005, p. 159) are as follow: they are ubiquitous unlike exogenous media which have limited range because they are confined to urban areas, they have high credibility because they are familiar and are controlled locally, they provide avenue for informal interpersonal communication which is indispensable to persuading people... They offer opportunities for participation by local people in development efforts by allowing them communicate with themselves and with development professionals and decisions makers.

What these mean is that indigenous communication is culture specific and can easily communicate the values, norms, attitudes and beliefs of the communities. Indigenous communication is easy to transmit from one generation to another because it takes no skill or technology to learn but can be transmitted, orally through simple practice and observation. Just as the modern mass media or the digital media spread messages via radio, television, film, prints, and other digital tools, indigenous communication shares ideas, messages and information to their various target audiences through various ways or channels. According to Nwosu (2005) the major channels through which the oramedia or indigenous media disseminate information to the people are: Opinion leaders, chiefs, local literati, town criers, drummers, flutist, community assemblies, groups, etc.

### 3.3.1. Opinion Leaders

These groups are found in every indigenous community. They are influential and knowledgeable about local events and issues. They also command a reasonable trust and confidence among the people. They are well known to the people as leaders whose ideas and opinions count. They are also accessible to the people and easily communicate desirable messages to the people. It is the trust that the people have on these individuals that makes it possible for the people to rely on them for information about their community and their socio- economic and political needs. They are also considered as custodians of knowledge and the people look up to them for major decisions that affect their community development.

### 3.3.2. Community Assembly and Age Grades

These groups are the social strata that exist in most rural communities, especially in the African setting. They include such community assemblies as men's meeting at family, kindred, village and town union levels. There are also women's meetings as wives and daughters. The youths are not left out. The various age grades who form social groups for community also serve as a channel of information dissemination and these groups provide "a perfect discussion arena for ideas" (Nwosu 2005, p.161). One major strength of the age grades and community assembly is that ideas shared in such gatherings are interactional and hugely participatory because issues raised are deliberated upon and consensus decisions are made from diverse opinions shared. Also, the face- to- face nature of these forms of communication makes it a credible medium of meaning exchange.

### 3.3.3. Town Crier

Rural communities in Africa rely heavily on the town crier or the local news man, or village announcer for the transmission of news and other timely information. He is the mass medium of the local community (Nwosu, 2005) who goes round the community with ogene (gong) or ekwe (talking drum) announcing the news or notice for the people in his loud voice. The kinds of information shared by the town crier are diverse. They range from the message from the traditional ruler, to events, festivals, meetings, and any upcoming ceremonies in the community. Also, any threat or invasions from neighbouring communities and so on are disseminated by the village announcer. Ugboajah, (1985) cited in Asemah (2011, p. 334) describes the town crier as "a significant village broadcaster who summons the elders for decision making and relays their decision to the village masses for implementation". These messages are mostly delivered in the early morning hours or late evenings depending on the community in question, when most inhabitants are indoors.

### 3.3.4. Drummers

For drummers, flutist and village story tellers, they are seen in traditional ceremonies as local artists playing their traditional musical instrument and communicating meaning to the people who understand the messages inferred in the melody of their tunes. The folklores are also instructional media that are well understood by the specific communities in their specific cultural setting which non-members may not understand. This means that each indigenous community communicates with and among themselves using the available channel of communication. Asadu, (2012, p. 65) opines that "as Africans, most of our communication channels are embedded in oral media, folk lore, myth, cultural artifacts, symbols etc."

What distinguished the indigenous communication from the digital media of today is the face- to- face nature of the indigenous communication which can only reach a limited number of people unlike the mass audience that can be reached with the digital media. However, that face-to-face nature of the indigenous communication according to Quaint (2018) remains a powerful means of reaching ones audience because it provides instant feedback and personal satisfaction. Through face-to-face communication, the sender and the receiver can share a better understanding of their interaction because other non-verbal cues that aid message understanding will be added to make more meaning which leads to a more effective communication. Incidentally, the evolution of the traditional mass media had a tremendous impact on the indigenous communication, the emergence of digital media, according to Simon and Ndoma (2016) became more detrimental to indigenous communication. Many citizens now see indigenous communication channels as local and primitive means of communication that can only serve a local audience. The traditional face-to-face method has been changed to machine mediated medium.

### *3.4. Digital Culture, a Threat to Indigenous Communication*

Carpentier, Lie and Servaes (2003) aver that what defines indigenous communication are access by the community and participation of the community. This means that indigenous communication is known to the people, it is easily accessible to the people and it belongs to the people. The indigenous communication is within the reach of the local

people who can easily access such form of communication and are part and parcel of the process. It is not only a bottom-top form of communication but an interactive and participatory communication where the roles of the senders and receivers are interchangeable. The audience of the indigenous communication is a group of people in a community who share a common interest. They are bound by their closeness and affinity in social, demographic, economic, cultural, religious and political characteristic as well as a common identity. The people naturally partake in the traditional communication at no cost in a face-to-face mode.

The above scenario is quite different when digital culture is considered. The digital media offers a global platform for information exchange. With the internet access, the digital media technology provides a distribution channel to new mode of global engagement and interconnectedness that was previously never envisaged by man. From any part of the world a user can share his or her idea or content uncensored. This liberty or democratization of communication appears to be a major threat to indigenous cultures of the world which were hitherto embodied and transmitted by the indigenous communication.

The digital audiences of the digital culture freely make sense of the world with the multiplicity of media channels and the ubiquitous digital tools leading to the emergence of a new populist super culture or high culture. Lull (2001) describes super culture as a fusion of universal values, international service, nations, regions and practice of everyday life. This super culture, no doubt, is largely Eurocentric or more of American culture which is propagated by the Western advanced countries at the detriment of the South or developing countries of the world. The blurring of national boundaries in the digital culture implies that indigenous communication and culture may no longer be safe. The digital media have made communication and exchange of ideas far and wide very easy (Lovejoy, 1999) cited in Himmerlstein and Aslama (2003). Today, the world is experiencing a commodified global culture which is capable of encapsulating national boundaries and national cultural identity. This development is another evidence of the big blow that digital culture is exerting on indigenous communication.

With the widespread adoption of global culture following the proliferation of digital culture, indigenous cultures in rural communities will suffer because that human contact among the inhabitants of traditional rural communities will gradually fade away, while those integrative force found in oral media that help to maintain social harmony and equilibrium will be dislodged by the digital culture, which is technologically mediated. For instance, in a typical indigenous communication setting, there is a robust democratization of participation and the individual participants in the process are active. However, the digital culture is technology driven and that warmth of the human touch is lost. Although the digital culture also has wide participation and access for users, access is limited to a considerable chunk of the population who are not literate in both the technology and language of the digital media. In this regard, a greater percentage of people living in rural areas of developing nations of the world are alienated or marginalized. Again, cultural pride which is fostered by indigenous communication will be eroded as more citizens embrace digital culture.

Another negative threat to indigenous communication is the promotion of universal language by digital culture. For instance English language is predominantly promoted as the computer language and unless one learns English language, he/she cannot access the data in the computer. This tends to kill the indigenous language of local communities especially those of developing countries in Africa. Murphy (2011) laments that mono cultures and popular culture with the image and contents of western culture are predominating the cultures of the world. One consequence of this propagation of universal global culture is the suppression of the indigenous languages and cultures of the world. This threat will also impact negatively on the motivation to learn indigenous languages and cultures which can eventually lead to extinction of such languages. The motivation to gain cultural knowledge of the indigenous people will also be very low since the native languages are only useful in the local environment. What this implies is that the digital media which gave rise to the digital culture is killing the indigenous communication.

Another negative consequence of digital culture on indigenous communication is the extinction of the indigenous languages and a total erosion of the culture and tradition of indigenous peoples of the world. When the western languages and cultures are presented as superior or better than the indigenous languages, cultural imperialism will be the natural effect.

By celebrating digital culture, indigenous communication will die a gradual death and the more the digital audiences embrace the digital media which hardly reflect the experience, norms, worldview and cultural identity of the indigenous communities, cultural diversity will give way to cultural homogeneity especially among the youths. Simon and Ndoma (2016) blame the digital media for the continuous waning of the indigenous culture because digital media appear more desirable, more advanced and more modern. The digital media audiences erroneously see the indigenous communication as obsolete, local, barbaric, native, traditional, and fetish (Chikaan and Ahmed, 2011; Robert and Dibie, 2005; Prah, 2019).

Evidently, the major roles of the mass media in the society according to Uyo (1987) cited in Simon and Ndoma (2016) which include persuasion, education, news, information, interpretation, selling and entertainment are also played by the indigenous media. When people embrace the digital culture, they will be influenced by the new cultures promoted in the digital media and with globalizing trends of the global media which predominantly propagates western culture, the digital culture tends to batter, endanger, and kill indigenous cultures (Simon and Ndoma, 2016).

What should have been more beneficial for the indigenous communities of the world will be a blend of indigenous communication with the digital culture. The crave for digital culture and a total neglect of indigenous communication has resulted to a pollution of indigenous cultures where alien values and norms are now the order of the day. Chikaan and Ahmed (2011) lament about the erosion of the indigenous values of the indigenous cultures and the entrenchment of such cultures as pornography, cyber bullying, television violence, sagging, drug abuse and human trafficking. Other alien

cultures now trending in Africa are sexton, lesbianism, homosexuality, artificial beauty etc., which are being propagated with the social media that are free for all.

The impact of the digital culture is palpable, and obvious. The threat is evident. Digital culture is killing indigenous communication speedily. When a people who are previously at home with their traditional indigenous means of communication begin to jettison their traditional mode of meaning exchange to imbibe a popular digital culture, then, the continuing survival of such traditional model of communication will be under threat.

Although the modern mass media “addressed the issue of message frequency and reach” (Owuamalam, 2016, p. 20), the extent indigenous communication can go as regards reach is far below that of the digital media in sharing information to media audience. However, that richness of the human touch that is untainted with the glitz of modernity deserves to be protected by all means. The essence of protecting and promoting indigenous communication pattern is to preserve those cultural events that bind people together as members of a community.

Again, if culture is the totality of what distinguishes a people, then the need to protect indigenous communication which promotes indigenous cultures as frequently campaigned by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation in several reports (UNESCO, 2005; UNESCO, 2009). The beauty of intercultural communication and the global concern for cultural diversity also calls for a conscious effort to protect indigenous communication from dying. Cultural diversity can only exist if different cultures protect and promote their own unique way of life, including communication since any form of communication that can enhance the quality of life of a considerable number of citizens should not be allowed to die. Such communication format should be aggressively protected and promoted by critical stakeholders. Critical steps also need to be taken to ensure their survival.

#### 4. Discussion of Findings

Communication trends are ever changing. From the traditional oramedia, where local resources are used to share meaning, especially in rural communities, to the invention of the modern mass media with the Gutenberg’s printing press that ushered in the printed word which enhanced reading and literacy. A reading culture was entrenched. However, the advent of the broadcast media with the invention of radio and television posed a huge threat to the print media because the broadcast media leveraged on the strength of the human voice in their aural (radio) and audio-visual (television) technology that makes messages more credible and believable with their instantaneous and simultaneous approach to become one of the most effective means of communication (Okunna and Omenugha, 2012). The broadcast media, especially the television also enjoys the advantage of including non-verbal cues in message transmission like facial expression, sound effects and body language which the print technology lacks but the emergence of digital media have increasingly waned the power of the broadcast media as a popular means of communication.

The new media technologies frequently found in the digital tools now available with the proliferation of digital media offer a wide range of possibilities for users. From information, education, entertainment, social relationship, economic and political needs, the digital media platforms offer users a great deal of opportunities to share ideas and meanings with tremendous satisfaction because the users are free to access information from multiple channels at their own time and in their own way. It is this obvious liberty to access all manner of information from the internet and to upload unthinkable contents in the social media that is considered by many scholars as the bane of the digital culture (Okunna and Omenugha, 2012; Nwabueze, 2014). Also significant from the ongoing analysis is the obvious danger which the digital culture poses to indigenous communication as more citizens adopt the use of digital tools to access the social media, which is gradually eroding local cultures and endangering the indigenous communication. It is, perhaps, this effect that prompted the UNESCO (2009) fears or grave concern when it reports that digital cultures are having a considerable impact on cultural identities especially among young people”.

#### 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Digital culture is here with us and as citizens of the developing countries; we can embrace the global trend. However, since every social group belongs to a community that is indigenous, there is need to hold firmly to those things that make a social group unique. Those values, norms and beliefs that make people who they are that are embodied in their indigenous culture should never be battered or killed. The beauty and strength of the digital culture which has made the world more connected and globalised than was previously possible is a welcome trend but the researchers strongly posit that rather than destroy indigenous communication on the altar of digital culture, communities should protect and promote their indigenous communication by blending the two communication models in a glocalised approach. Glocalisation, according to Robertson (1995) is derived from a Japanese word ‘dochakua’ meaning ‘global localization, which he says will ultimately shape the world. It means “any form of interaction or relation that stems from a local environment like a source or originator of a product or idea from one country that stretches beyond the shores of that originating country to other countries of the world becomes a glocalised product or service” (Ezeonyejiaku, 2019, p.8). It means the blend of a foreign or local content, product or idea to suit a local audience. This has become necessary in view of the globalising trend in all facets of life including communication. This view has been echoed by Simon and Ndoma (2016) who called for a blending, reformation and transformation of indigenous communication through the mass media of communication with the digital technology. It becomes expedient that indigenous communication found in various communities of the world should be preserved, while a gradual adoption of digital culture can be promoted where both indigenous and digital media can operate side by side without one suppressing the other.

The call by UNESCO (2005) for the protection of the cultural diversity in expressions in the word, sound, image, print and artistic works and activities affirms the urgent need for indigenous communication to be promoted and preserved because



it is only by so doing that indigenous peoples of the world can still have their indigenous communication and local cultures preserved. It is in the light of the above premise that the researchers recommend the following:

- Indigenous communication should be used by side digital media;
- Communities should protect and preserve their local and indigenous means of communication;
- The task of promoting and protecting indigenous communication should be taken seriously by government and nongovernmental organizations since they are now under a heavy pressure of going into extinction due to the onslaughts by the trending digital culture;
- A glocalisation of indigenous communication is equally recommended so as to market the beauty of indigenous communication to a global audience.

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