

## **Media Imperative for the Globalization of Nigeria Culture**

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### **Abstract**

*The problem of cultural degradation and high respect for foreign cultures of Europe and America more than Nigerian cultures are the major problems in this study. The paper sets to examine media imperatives for the globalization of Nigerian cultures. The paper answers the question of if Nigeria has a culture in the affirmative and adopts the analytical research method to identify Nigerian cultures, to find out how foreign cultures have affected Nigerian cultures and to explain how Nigerian cultures can be upgraded to be universally appreciated. The paper concludes that foreign cultures have been preferred to local cultures by many Nigerians, while some have are not ready to associate with local cultures. The paper recommends that Nigerian material cultural objects should be upgraded, refined and promoted through media channels such as the Nigerian film industry and other outlets by the Federal Ministry of Information and Cultural orientation.*

**Key words: Cultural, Globalization, Imperative, Media, Nigerian.**

## **Introduction**

In Nigeria as in other countries in Africa, there exist varieties of ethnic groups with different aspects of material and non-material cultures peculiar to them. In Nigeria, the major ethnic groups are the Hausas, the Igbos, and the Yorubas. Other "minor" ethnic groups include the Efiks, the Tivs, the Jukuns, the Fulanis, the Nupes, the Igbirras, the Itsekiris, the Ij'aws and the Anangs among several others. These groups exist within the same region but possess distinct cultural characteristics such as language, norms and values, types of dresses, occupation and dances. These aspects form the basis for the sub-cultural differences among the ethnic groups that exist within the country. These differences therefore make it difficult for Nigeria as a nation to have a single direction of cultural heritage as obtainable in most developed countries of Europe and America. This multiplicity of cultures has brought to fore the question of whether Nigeria has a culture or not.

The discourse on culture is a delicate one. First, the definition of culture is assuming a high level of relativism that the term cannot be defined to suit a general description of ways of life of a people. Second, considering the ever evolving trends in contemporary world, the explanation of culture has spread to embrace the totality of old and new ways of life by a people. Given the latter exposition, one is tempted to infer that culture could be positive if it favours and promotes the good image of the people in question but negative if it is capable of jeopardizing the good image of a people. Consequently, cultures can be considered as positive and negative as well.

The examination of culture in general could render one benefit of an ideal definition with regards to the real culture of a people within a given geographical region. This is because culture can be inherited from past generations or forgotten about completely especially in the wake of newer cultures that possibly occur by means of diffusion, acculturation or enculturation. Enculturation is a process where an individual learns the way of life or behaviour of his own culture or society while acculturation is a continuous adaptation of new traits or patterns as a result of contact with other culture (Agabi et al, 2-3). The concepts of enculturation and acculturation are totally believed to have taken their tolls on the ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Today, it is common to see Nigerians adopting foreign cultures exemplified in language, modes of dressing, of eating, of walking, and so on. Acculturation is not a crime, but the evil about the process is that it causes a people to abandon aspects of their cultures and embrace new ones which may be detrimental to the ideals of their very cultures. Wearing of clothes that expose the sensitive parts of one's body is very much un-African, but a common practice in other parts of the world. The domination of cultures or subordination of culture through acculturation is what has come to be known as cultural imperialism.

Despite the spread of the dominant cultures of Western Europe, America and Japan, to Nigeria and other third world countries, some "positive" cultures of Nigeria still survive, yet they remain unheard of. The most popular aspects of Nigerian cultures that have attracted international concerns are mostly the negative aspects. This has made the country to be associated with cultures such as corruption, embezzlement of funds, tribalism, nepotism and bribery among others that globalization are the mass media. The mass media are transmitters of both positive and negative cultures, depending on who dictates the direction of the flow of information and communication. Globalization itself is a topical issue and the efforts made

towards articulating its constructs are almost lost in myth and mystery. Yet, the discourse on the issue grows wider every day.

Summarily, globalization is viewed as the process of intensification of economic, political, social and cultural relation across international boundaries. Globalization is often described as a harmonization process that promotes the similarity and transfer of certain ideals evolved by some powers. Critics of globalization have argued that the process favours only the initiators of the idea, who include the industrialized countries of Western Europe, America and other European countries. Those favoured by globalization process occupy the apex position on the globe while the poor nations who have little or nothing to offer occupy the peripheral quarters of the globalized village. However, this study is prompted by the fact that Nigeria has a lot to offer to the world and media imperatives are the best forum for the globalization of the Nigerian culture.

The problem of this study therefore lies in the fact that many cultural attributes of Nigerians, that are positive, remain unnoticed within the global village. The utilization of media strategies can reorder this trend. This paper therefore attempts a redefinition and re-examination of Nigerian culture. The paper also explores the relative concepts of globalization as well as the media and attempts to articulate the media imperatives necessary for the globalization of Nigerian culture.

### **The Nigerian culture**

Attempt to define or articulate the Nigerian culture could be quite challenging, if not frustrating. This is primarily because of the new status that culture has assumed in the scholarly world. A discourse on culture alone could be problematic. Sociologists, historians, and anthropologists have all shared almost a similar concept on what culture is. Culture is generally referred to a social heritage or knowledge, beliefs, customs and skills that are available to the members of a society (Broom and Selznick, 50). The preceding definition has

failed to emphasize the material aspects of culture made possible by the techniques and methods of art, music, making pottery, building houses or carving monoliths. Another scholar extends the definition of culture to cover the set of attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours shared by a group of people, communicated from one generation to the next through language or some other means of communication. This definition, though more extensive than the former, is "fuzzy" because there are necessarily no hard and fast rules of how to determine what a culture is or who belongs to that culture (Matsumoto, 5).

The most art of defining culture in contemporary times is governed by the ever changing nature of the world, the criticisms of ideas, the multiplicity of cultures and sub-cultures within a region, the period of cultural display in questions, reasons for acculturation and trends that culminate to social change. Thus, to state that culture is a total way of life of people transmitted through means of communication is grossly inadequate. Culture in this study is considered as the total way of life of people in a given society, which includes beliefs, customs, and skills at a given time, which further includes ideas and practices adopted and practiced by the people as well as the physical artifacts and materials associated with those people., culture is transmitted from one generation to the next and as such may be lost in transits. Cultural aspects may be lost complete because of other powerful forces of a foreign culture accepted and cherished by the people first as trends, and second as permanent ways of life. This implies that culture may be abandoned and new cultures embraced for countless reasons.

Other cultures are not traded completely, but partially. When people let go a little proportion of their practices to embrace a proportion of other alien cultures and blend the two, partial acculturation has occurred, this view further leads to the understanding that cultures could be permanent or temporary. Permanent cultures are hardly forgone. Such cultural aspects and practices live with the people forever as generations come and go.

Temporarily, cultures are easily eroded for reasons that dominant cultures have overtaken them, they are no longer in alignment with the objectives, expectations or development of the people, or the people simply don't like them again. Over time, forces within and outside the society may cause changes in cultural practices. This also brings us to the categorization of positive and negative cultures. Positive cultures are ways of life or material aspects of life that the people cherish because of the benefits attached to them, including ordinary sense of pride. Negative cultures are beliefs and ways of live that antagonize the image of the people which they may uphold due to fear of the unknown or as means of survival. They are practices that people indulge in sometimes as a last resort or alternative to hope. Nigeria is a West African country located within four geographical regions of the Sahel Sahara, the grasslands or the savannah regions, the forest region and the rain forest regions. The country with a population of more than 130 million as at 2005 count is bound on the west by Benin Republic, on the east by Cameroon Republic, on the north by Niger Republic and on the south by the Atlantic ocean. The country is famous for its three major tribes of Hausa (fulanis inclusive), Igbo and Yoruba, as well as hundreds of tribes and ethnic groups such as the Efik, the Ibibio, the Anang, the Kalahari, the Ijaw, the Itsekiri in the south south region, the Tiv, [gala, Idoma, Doma, Jukun.Arago, Igbira, Bercon, Nupe, Yergum, Angassawa, Jarawa in the middle belt, and Kanuri, Dakakari, Gwari, Kamuku among others in the northern region (Amadi, ii). Given the above scenario, it is quite difficult to infer that Nigeria has a culture because each of the tribes and ethnic groups in the country possesses their peculiar cultural attributes, knowledge, ideas, norms, values, beliefs and artifact which make them different from others. However, this study ascertains that Nigeria of today has a culture and the cultures can be major cultures. The question of whether Nigeria has a culture of not is rather paradoxical and inconspicuous.

As Nigerians, it is debatable whether we have a culture. We have several cultures and even sub-cultures-Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Efik, Ibibio, Annang, Edo, Urhobo, Tiv, Fulani, Ijaw, Kanuri, Itsekiris etc. We do not have a Nigeria culture. If you doubt, check on the various marriages, burial and naming ceremonies. They are different from one ethnic group to another and sometimes even within ethnic groups. It is a loose term as far as Nigeria of today is concerned. There is as yet no Nigeria way of life. There are several ways of life in Nigeria (Doughuja, 195).

The above assertion is held comparatively to foreign culture such as those of the British and the Americans where there is uniformity in cultural practices and artificial identities. Secondly, the assertion was held in ignorance of the fact that certain ways of life have been adopted by Nigerians world over irrespective of tribe, religion or geographical location. Nigeria today has both positive and negative cultures. In Nigeria, sub-cultures of the independent tribes, shared by at least two, three, four or five ethnic groups have been adopted as national cultures because of their positively and interest to the development and growth of the country. Games like draft, seed games, traditional wrestling are practices shared by many and accepted today as Nigeria cultures soliciting global recognition. The ordinary wrappers and styles of sowing long sleeves "caftan" or "agbada" are fashionable wears adopted by many tribes in Nigeria and as such it has become a positive Nigerian culture. Similarity in Nigerian modes of farming, type of seedlings foods or fruit presently originating from the country's style of cooking meals, styles of gorgeous dressing, recognition and respect for elders, kindness and instant invitation to meals, quality greetings and exhibition of concern over immediate and extended family members among others, are all positive aspects of the Nigeria culture.

Despite the positive culture of Nigeria which has defence for quality and originality, Nigeria also has a negative culture exemplified in supernatural crimes, welfare, child and

women slavery, secret societies, adultery, social and sexual discrimination and 'awuf (Amadi, 8,15,21,30,42,65-82). The negative cultures of Nigeria as enumerated above are common among almost all tribes. Such cultures include using supernatural means to abort a pregnancy or to kill somebody through witchcraft, picking up arms against neighbouring communities at the slightest provocation, subjecting children and women to mental and physical slavery, looking down on women because of the men's consideration that the male folk is more relevant than the women folk, and so on, not finding the poor worthy of contributing to national decisions because they don't have means to voice out, and above all, considering bribery and corruptions as the shortest means of achieving success in any direction.

To reiterate the obvious, Nigeria considers the positive aspects of her sub-cultures as its culture. The need to sanitize, uphold and transmit the Nigerian culture is what actually instigated the Nigerian cultural policy. The Nigerian cultural policy is retrieving and restoring Nigeria's history and heritage in order to protect them for posterity so as to use them as a factor in Nigeria's domestic and foreign policies. The objectives of the Nigerian cultural policy are summarized as follows:

... to mobilize and motivate people by disseminating and propagating ideas which promote national pride, solidarity and consciousness, to evolve from our plurality, a national culture ... to promote creativity in the field of arts, science and technology, to ensure the continuity of traditional skills and sports and their progressive updating to serve modern development needs as our contribution to world growth of culture and ideas, to establish a code of behaviour compactable without tradition of humanism and a disciplined moral society... to enhance national self-reliance and self-sufficiency, and reflect our cultural heritage and national aspiration in the process of industrialization (Bello, 190).

The criticism that Nigeria's cultural policy has faced is the question of if the nation has achieved or is in the process of achieving those objectives or not. This because the cultural policy has not stated the specific "national cultural(s)" it seeks to promote. Secondly,



with the avalanche of negative (or indiscrete) cultures adopted by Nigerians, it appears the nation still has a very long way to go.

### **Revisiting globalization**

The concept of globalization has been examined as a contemporary phenomenon that permeates the political, economic and socio-cultural angles of every nation in the world today. Globalization is a term that has been discussed in advertising, the mass media, history, economic and political science. Commonly used in mass communication, globalization is:

the process of integration of the world community into a common system either economically, socially, culturally or commercially; it is a world-wide process based on dissemination of information, products, system and technology which brings rapid economic and cultural interaction (Ike, 95).

In the former, globalization is viewed as a process whereby state-centric agencies and terms reference are dissolved in favour of a structure of relations between actors operating in a context which is truly global rather merely international (Evang and Newnham, 201). Many scholars have received the term globalization with high criticisms. One of the scholars rather prefers to use the term "global capital" because it represents a further "deteritorilization," abstraction and concentration of capital or an unprecedented penetration of local society globally by the economy and culture of capital; so that the local understood in a "traditional" sense may be less relevant than ever (Dirlik, 28). Another perspective of globalization is blunter. Globalization is considered as been driven by the interpenetration of the advanced capitalist countries and in particular by the intensification of transfer during three economic macro regions: Northern America/United States, East Asia/Japan and Europe/European Union. To the extent that the capital that buzz around the world most of the time finds a resting place in advanced capitalist countries (Axtmann, 34). Globalization entails not only

the integration of markets, but also the emergence of global civil society. The decrease of communication costs, transportation costs and artificial barriers to goods and factors of production has led to a closer integration of the economics of the world. Globalization implies mobility not only of goods and services but also of capital and knowledge and to a lesser extent of people (Stiglitz, 51). Another view holds that globalization connotes that we live in an era in which the greater part of social life is determined by global processes in which national cultures, national economics and national borders are dissolving (Hirst and Thompson, 1).

Globalization has become a popular term in international political economy (IPE) and in cultural studies. The main engines of globalization include the transnational corporation (TNC), transnational media organizations (TMOs), intergovernmental organization (IGOs), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and alternative government (AGOs). Globalization entails both positive and negative consequences and it is both narrowing and widening the income gaps among and within nations, intensifying and diminishing political domination and the homogenizing and pluralizing cultural identities (Gigg, 2). Problematically, globalization has negatively affected the political, economic, and social nerves of the weaker member states or third world countries. The "uneven thesis" of globalization does not give room for comfort to third world nations but rather affect them negatively, relegates ethical equities and social concerns behind market consideration and reduces the autonomy of the states, (Akindele, Gidado and Olapo, 1). Thus, globalization challenges the meditative role of the states vis-a-vis external pressures and threatens the discretion of African states everywhere. There must be a way out if Africa must participate fairly in the global village affairs.

Globalization has been considered by researchers to mean three things. The first is the global expansions of Western European economic, political and military activities under the

mercantilist and capitalist drives from about 1450 to this day; the second is the global West European and United States capitalist drives under different forms of campaign for free trade, Private Smith in the eighteenth century to this day. The third is the current globalization campaign launched by world Trade Organisation after the turn of events in the USSR, Eastern, Europe and China and also as a follow up of the Structural Adjustment Programme which was the campaign of the Breton Woods trio from 1983 to about 1995 (Toyo, 44-45).

The global world today is divided into the following groups of countries;

- a. Imperialist or G7 countries, 11 highly industrialized(e.g. the USA and Japan).
- b. Highly industrialized and independent other capitalist countries (e.g. Sweden and Austria)
- c. Well industrialized capitalist countries partly satellite of imperialism (Australia and Canada)
- d. So-called newly industrialized capitalist countries among which many are clients of imperialism (like Brazil) or hostages of imperialism (like Israel or Taiwan)
- e. A host of non-industrialized capitalist states (e.g. Nigeria)
- f. Highly industrialized transitional socialist states (e.g. North Korea, China)
- g. Partially industrialized transitional socialist states(e.g. North Korea, China)
- h. Transitional socialist states of the newly industrializing variety (Vietnam, Cuba).
- i. Developing countries not transitional socialist but aware of imperialism and opposed to it (e.g. India, Tanzania) (Toyo, 47).

To conclude this discourse on globalization with respect to Nigerian culture, it is obvious to state that in industrialized nations of Africa like Nigeria, globalization is not a favourable course because their ideologies (if at all they have), their cultures, their political structures and economic constructs are neither recognized or ranked among any in the world. Globalization of Africa by Western Europe and North America has been most parasitic from

the slave trade through colonialism to the neocolonialism of the Bretton Woods trio. Such abysmal indicators point to the need for a tremendous political, industrial, technological and cultural-scientific revolution (Toyo, 59).

### **Media imperative for Nigerian culture**

This study has pointed to the fact that Nigeria has a culture attained from the nationalization of sub-cultures of the ethnic groups within her region, especially those practices, beliefs, norms values and aspects of materials culture that are commonly shared by them. The common use of pidgin English and some common cultural values as well as material items such as mortar/pestle and musical instruments/rhythms make one optimistic that the articulation and popularization of Nigerian culture is possible and potentially useful (Derefaka, 231). This has not been done or well done. Media imperatives for Nigeria's cultural development and globalization demands the true function of the Nigerian radio, Nigerian newspaper and Nigerian magazines to entertain, inform and educate. With respect to cultural education, the big questions are education for what and for whom? What kind of entertainment and for whom? Information on what and for whom? There is belief by Nigerian writers that it is immoral for media practitioners to promote foreign values at the expense of our cherished cultural values of hard work, (Shenge, 213).

Functionally therefore, the federal government should sit up financially and strongly commit herself to the development of all Nigerian media (government owned) to international standards, as attempted with the case of Nigerians Television Authority (NTA) and Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FCRN). Transmissions should be reviewed online, the federal government should put in place laws that would enhance longer hours of international broadcasts during which programmes content of radio and television relevant to Nigerian realities, history, culture, artifacts, values and national interest are featured. Media

programmes should be broadcast in English Language, Pidgin English and other foreign languages for people in other parts of the world to listen, view and understand and all local stations within the country must hook up during such broadcast. The federal government should employ a monitoring team in every state and region to ensure regional hook up during such broadcast or face the wrath of the law.

There is a conception that satellites carrying television signals now enable people on the other side of the globe to be exposed regularly to a traffic in information and ideas so much that their cultures transmitted through these global media channels influence the tastes, lives and countries across the globe have devised measures to checkmate foreign cultures and globalize theirs too.

France and Canada have also passed laws to prohibit the satellite dissemination of foreign-meaning American - content surprisingly, in many other countries-fundamentalist Iran, communist China, and the closely managed society Singapore central government has aggressively sought to restrict the software and programming that reach their citizens. Their explicit objective is to keep out American and other alien political views, more, and as it is called in some parts of the Middle East, "new pollution" (Rothkopf, 447).

Nigeria should not be an exception if the country must globalize its cultures. Regulation of media programmes should be taken seriously. Foreign programmes at this level should not be restricted completely, but should constitute only about 20% while 80% of programmes should comprise Nigerian cultures. In the transmission of programmes, the federal government needs to acquire transmitters and upgrade the media stations and their facilities to standards that would compete with those of the best international media like BBC and CNN. Those who should be employed in the upgraded stations should be personalities with the right qualifications in the fields of mass communication, media arts, theatre arts, cultural studies and other courses in the humanities. Such media personalities

should be accorded further training in all fields of human endeavour as may be necessary for the media job. Existing national stations such as NTA and FRCN should be monitored strictly and encouraged to promote pure Nigerian cultures that are positive Nigerian cultures, languages and Pidgin English should be encouraged in addition to transmission in English language. Nigerian foods that have assumed national status such as the "garri" and soup like "melon", "afang" and others should be offered to the world. The media should let the world know that "abacha" (African salad), formerly a delicacy of the Ibos alone but now enjoyed by almost all Nigerians is as nutritious as the English salad if not more. Pounded yam alongside other foods produced from millets or corns cheaply made but contains enough carbohydrates required for the human body, e.g. "Akamu". Drinks like "kunu", made out of redcorn could serve a better alternative to bottled and can drinks. "Zobo" made out of *Hibiscus Sabdariffa* could be nutritious and medicinal at the same time traditional medicines are part of the Nigerian culture.

Given the fact that the cost of medical care is rising within the countries that experience shortage of medical facilities, traditional medicines are cheap but effective, and should be encouraged. Types such as "dongonyaro", use of bitter leaves and other herbs should be presented adequately through the media, especially for communities across the globe that cannot afford the modern care. Even developed nations can still make useful ideas such as Agbada, "caftan", wrappers and native hats and head gears for women should be presented by the media and their relevance to different occasions or weathers discussed. While these cultural goods and their transmission are nurtured through programmes, they could be advertised globally through the Nigerian media. Tourist sites should be advertised on all available global media including BBC and CNN. The presentation of sites and artifacts such as the Obudu Cattle Ranch in Calabar, TINAPA resort yet to commence full functioning, water falls, Yankari Games Reserve in Bauchi, international standard hotels

within the country, the Olumo Rock, the Aso Rock in Abuja among others could attract the presence of investors who would turn fortunes of the Nigeria culture into a huge success, if transmitted to the world through global media. Negative cultures should be discouraged simultaneously while morals such as respect for elders should be preached.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has examined the concept of culture as more than a way of life of people including the norms, values, beliefs, ideas and artifacts that are cultural identities of a people at a given time. Culture has been viewed as a process that can change or something that can be permanent. Culture is also categorized into positive and negative culture. Most of the cultures practiced in Nigeria are more of foreign or adopted, especially the Western cultures copied through the mass media. The problems associated with the western cultures, including the emergence of negative cultures such as social discrimination, supernatural, corruption and bribery among others have increased the yearning for more foreign cultures at the expense of practices and ways of life that hitherto serve as the permanent cultures of Nigeria. Despite these, certain cultures of Nigeria that have assumed national status and recognition have been recognized.

The question whether Nigeria has a culture or not now has an answer that the country does. For these cultures to survive longer and do the country more good in terms of respect, development and recognition, the federal government need to invest in media development and upgrading in order to globalize these cultures integration of cultural aspects into the political, social-cultural and economic spheres of other countries across the globe. If the Nigerian cultures are globalize, whatever advantages accrued to globalization of foreign cultures would be enjoyed by the country.

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