

## ANALYSING THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF MEDIATED COMMUNICATION AND GLOBALISATION IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*The paper descriptively provides an insight to the interdependencies of the new media of communication and globalisation. Due to the social significance of communication in society this research is imperative. This is a sociological approach to the study of the new media of communication to explain its social implications in the context of globalised world. Many controversies are continuously generated on the phenomenon of globalisation. Its effect and impact on personal life, social, economic and political sphere has been at the heart of debates by scholars. The paper explored the complimentary role of the new media in globalisation as compatible constructs in global domination. The interest of transnational corporations by implication, developed nations are achieved and sustained through the pervasiveness of new media messages.*

**Keywords:** Communication, Globalization, Sociological Approach and Transnational Corporations

### Introduction

Mediated communication depends on new media technologies. New media studies draw on theories and practices to analyse the social implications of the internet and interactive digital technologies on people's life and the public.

Approaches to the study of the new media differ. Some scholars positively appraise the present and potential social implications of the new media on society. Others are critical of the new media. Tuchman (2008:202) explicates that "just as some media-theorists propose new ways of individuals and groups to challenge the media's symbolic power, other theorists and researchers announce how the media are implicated in new incursion on societies, institutions, and human rights."

Critical approaches look at how media production and distribution affect society. Such scholars as Ed Herman and Robert McChesney (2001) suggest that the transition to new media has seen a handful of powerful transnational telecommunications corporations who own the majority and achieve a level of global influence." Global dominance and influence of the social, political and economic contexts has been a counterweight to its positive impact. Couldry and Curran (2003) as cited in Tuchman (2008:202) view new media and communications studies as:

*trying to explicate and theorize how media are implicated in the new world order - not simply the "world order" dominated by American hegemony, but the one being fashioned as political power (states), economic power (multinational corporations), and military power joined with symbolic power (media) to shape the conditions of contemporary life both here and around the world.*

Having discussed the concept of the new media, we will now examine the concept of globalisation. The concept of globalization has been in vogue and captures such ideas as culture, financial markets or economies, politics and so on. The propelling force of globalization lies in the vested interest of core

developed nations to control the world. Ohmae (1992) as quoted in Haralambos&Holborn (2004:571) notes that:

*Today, of course, people everywhere are more and more able to get the information they want directly from all corners of the world. They can see for themselves what the tastes and preferences are in other countries, the styles of clothing now in fashion, the sports, and the lifestyles.*

This global transformation is facilitated by technological developments in the new media of communication. To a large extent, this study disagrees with Ohmae (1992) on the vulnerability of national governments which has shifted power to individual consumers.

### **New Media and Globalisation: Their Interdependencies**

The process of globalisation is closely associated with developments in the new media that transformed the world into a global village (Giddens & Sutton: 2013). Obviously, globalisation is accompanied by unprecedented global change characterized by global social inequalities among nations. In his analysis of social implications of new technologies Rheingold (2003:158) acknowledges that “the same convergence of technologies that opens new vistas of cooperation also makes possible a universal surveillance economy . . .” The over-arching questions that frame the issues to be addressed in this research asks: (i) what is the role of the new media in globalization? (ii) Are new media and globalization compatible or contradictory analytical constructs in the global domination of societies? (ii) In whose interest and benefit are media and new communication technologies being used to reshape the world? In this regard, Flew (2002) emphasizes that globalization occurs as a result of the evolution of new media technologies. A most balanced analytical construct in the context of this study is provided by Giddens (1990). He defines globalization as “the intensification of worldwide social relationships which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa”. This process of intensification of social relationships is underlined by communication technological modernization such as the Internet and satellite television networks. In line with this perspective, Carely in Flew (1992) and Cairncross (1998) describe the development as ‘the death of distance’.

As the new media ‘radically break the connection between physical place and social place, making physical locations much less significant for our social relationships’ a global system evolves (Croteau and Hoynes 2003:311). Given the role of the new media in globalization it will be contradictory to suggest that the new media is a determining factor in globalization. Attention must be drawn to the process of funding research and production of technologies which in turn affect the users. In a similar way, Castells (1998) advises against technological determinism and portrays the compatibility of the new media and globalization as he acknowledges the emergence of a ‘new increasingly profitable global informational economy’ (Ritzer, 2000:450). Castells offers a sociological analysis of the global informational system as having engendered a culture of real virtuality and the emergence of network enterprises which promote capitalism.

Globalization is one phenomenon that continues to generate debate in and around the academic circle. Each side of the debate determines the approach to its definition. Its effect and impact on personal life, social, economic and political sphere has been at the heart of controversies by scholars. Straubhaar, Robert and Davenport (2009) affirms that another major aspect of globalization is “the increasingly worldwide penetration of media”. On one side of the continuum are scholars who support the debate for globalization. Schaefer (2005:60) describes globalization in the light of “worldwide integration of government policies, cultures, social movements, and financial markets through trade and exchange.” Globalization is considered as engendering cohesion among nation states while maintaining order in the social system.

Accordingly, Kluver (2006) understands globalization as referring “primarily to the ways in which economic and industrial institutions (such as industries or corporations) interact in various locations throughout the world, with primacy given to no specific geographic location.” Corporations are cited in developing countries in order to cut down the cost of production and maximize profits. Business transactions take place within and outside defined market boundaries. Grecio& Holmes (1999) observes that

“globalization has largely been driven by the interests and needs of the developed world.” Cheap labour in developing countries induces the location of industries. Goods and services produced are sold in places where the profit-making margin is high. Bhargava (2004:1) corroborates that “the new communications and information technology have produced methods for large corporations to maximize profits by entering foreign markets.” Globalization enables organizations to take advantage of the peculiar circumstances in developing nations through outsourcing.

Globalization is perceived as having two qualities at the last World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. It is both a fact and a value. As a fact, it is the “real economic ties, institutions and realities that underlie a new economy.” It is a value because of the “extent to which we seek further integration of markets, pools of capital, and industries.” This distinction describes the tenets of globalization and profit maximization as the driving force. Multinational corporations establish branches outside their (headquarters) domain for market integration. Friedman (1999:7) is of the view that globalization involves the “inexorable integration of markets, nation states, and technologies to a degree never witnessed before.” This view acknowledges the mutual dependence existing between globalization and technology. Both play complimentary roles. The latter is the vehicle while the former serves to sustain the advancements in these areas. Straubhaar, Robert and Davenport (2009:509) reports an important observation:

*Twenty years ago people talked about the Americanization of media in the world. Today people talk more about globalization because it is apparent that although American media play a prominent role in the global scene, media industries from a number of other countries are also heavily across the world. A handful of firms dominate the globalize part of the media systems. The six largest are AOL, Time Warner (U.S), Disney ((U.S) Vivendi-universal (French), Bertelsmann (Germany), Viacom (U.S), and Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation (Australia). The other four main global firms are AT&T (U.S), Microsoft (U.S), and two media groups that are part of much large industrial corporations: General Electric/NBC (U.S) and Sony/Columbia/Tristar (Japanese) (Variety, 2007).*

The twin forces of globalization and the new media of communication have ripple effects on the economy of nation states. Nigeria has become a major importer of Asian-made goods and services. Most electronics and machines in the Nigerian market are produced in the Peoples Republic of China. Chinese have penetrated and conquered a market that was predominantly European and American. The engineering sector of the country is being dominated by the presence of Lebanese as against Germany.

Corroborating this view, Kluver (2006) highlights that “globalization allows the proliferation of information technologies, and creates a worldwide market and clear strategic incentives for the adoption of information technologies.” Globalization offers more opportunities for the proliferation of new media technologies. The change from cash to electronic card system of business transactions is facilitated by new media technologies. Financial risks involved in the movement and transaction with cash have greatly reduced. The banking sector in Nigeria avails itself the opportunities provided by the new media for safe business operation. Trading of stocks and forex have become veritable means of earning income around the globe. Business proposals and deals are made and sealed on-line by the use of new media technologies.

*Like every previous leap in technological power, the new convergence of wireless computation and social communication will enable people to improve life and liberty in some ways and to degrade it in others. The same technology has the potential to be used as both a weapon of social control and a means of resistance (Rheingold, 2003:158)*

Rheingold espouses the compatibility of the new media and globalization.

Globalization affects the level of information at the public sphere. The expansion of economic, social and political activities across national boundaries influences public communication. Assessing the degree of the impact of globalization and the new media on the society McQuail (2005:556-7) presents:

*Globalization is... the overall process whereby the location of production, transmission and receptions of media content ceases to be geographically fixed, partly as a result of technology, but also through international media structure and organization. Many cultural consequences are predicted to follow especially the delocalizing of content and undermining of local cultures. These may be regarded as positive when local cultures are enriched by new impulses and creative hybridization occurs. More often they are viewed as negative because of threats to cultural identity, autonomy and integrity. The new media are widely thought to be accelerating the process of globalization.*

McQuail identifies the holistic implication and nature of globalization. Virtual cultures, virtual markets, virtual communities, and virtual realities are constructed for public communication and interaction. The process of globalization exudes overwhelming influence on states.

However, cultural infiltration is one of the notable influences of globalization. Critics consider it to be “a successor to the imperialism and colonialism that oppressed Third World nations for centuries.” (Schaefer, 2005:11). To this end, some scholars cite “media imperialism” as its tool of dominance across national borders.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Colonialism established foreign political dominance over territories for economic development of the foreign country. In most cases, political domination and exploitation were imposed through military conquests. At the attainment of national independence by colonised countries foreign domination was perpetuated through imperialism. Practically, these countries were only handed down national sovereignty to govern themselves as independent nations. Imperialism is an extension of foreign influence on the social, political, cultural and economic sphere of nation states.

From this cultural standpoint, Vaagan (2010) refers to globalization as “the transfer of ideas and culture from the developed west to the undeveloped world, resulting in a homogenization of consumerist culture across borders that threaten to disrupt and permanently alter indigenous values.” Consumerist values have been further entrenched in the developing nations through globalization. It discourages local production of goods and services. Globalization impedes the growth of local industries. Finished goods from foreign nations flood the market at relatively cheap prices. National income of the importing country depreciates having a multiplier effect on its balance of payment. By implication, economic growth and development of these nations mostly Third World, are hampered.

Traditional values are lost to foreign culture. Schaefer infers that “they may discard or neglect their native language and dress as they attempt to copy the icons of mass market entertainment and fashion.” (2005:60). It is imperative to note the growing influence and dominance of American films, music and others on younger Nigerians. The increasing number of fast food centres that serve variety of foreign and local dishes point towards the ‘McDonaldization’ of the Nigerian society.

Contemporary critics of globalization “see it as a US-led (and to some extent also European) exploitation of a single worldwide market where new media forms are simply tools of an emerging surveillance economy and society.” (Hirst and Harrison 2007:49). It is obvious from the above comment in whose interest and benefits that globalization and new media reshape the society. This raises questions about the role of new media in society. An intellectual and a linguist, Professor Noam Chomsky views globalization as portending huge profits from advertising of foreign-made goods. Ideas, products and services would be a reflection of the owners of capital. There is the prevalence of advertisements as the major source of funding against information and communication. He appraises globalization as “the extension of transnational, corporate tyranny.” The primary aim of these “mega-corporations” is profit maximization. Their audiences are culturally vulnerable, disjointed and fragmented to forge a common front. The new media becomes a vehicle for propagating new products and services, cultures and liberal market economies. Globalization polarizes the world into the rich and poor. The poor is impoverished the more

while the rich is enriched the more. These and more are some of the vicissitudes of globalization that the developing countries face.

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