
**IMPACT OF WESTERN MEDIA BROADCASTING ON
CULTURE VALUES AND DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS IN
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: PERSPECTIVE FROM GHANA**

¹* William McBagonluri Appiah & ²Prof George Ayittey Baffour

***Corresponding Author mcbogonlurapp.12@gmail.com**

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study: The main purpose of the study was to evaluate the impact of media broadcasting on culture values and democratization process in sub-Saharan Africa: perspective from Ghana.

Methodology: The study looked at the impact of media broadcasting on culture values and democratization process in sub-Saharan Africa: perspective from Ghana. Desk study review methodology was used for the paper where relevant empirical literature was reviewed to identify main themes. A very thorough review of empirical literature took place to expound on the impact of media broadcasting on culture values and democratization process in sub-Saharan Africa: perspective from Ghana.

Result: The mass media in developing countries have been described as Trojan horses for the transmission of western values and for the perpetuation of cultural imperialism. Foreign programmes dominate our media screens. Programmes that have little or no redeeming values as far as our culture is concerned consistently feature on our media channels. Many third world

countries including Ghana import over fifty percent of their media programmes. They do this, not from other developing countries which many be near self-sufficiency in media product. Consequent upon many years of colonization of Africa by developed nations, there has been a widening gap in their level of development.

Recommendation: Africa should manage the mass media to solve her information priorities. Technology should be harnessed to address the socio-cultural, political, economic and industrial problems of all African nations and these should be the directions of change. The aim should be to nurture democracy in Africa, achieve high educational rates and speedy economic growth so as to gain a stronger voice in the communication terrain through which she would assert herself in the international arena. The study recommends that the Ghana population should be aware of their responsibilities towards the community which is the principle way of helping development.

Keywords: *Media broadcasting, Cultural values, sub-Saharan Africa, Culture values, Democratization.*

INTRODUCTION

The media industries play a major role in the trend of globalization today. Western transnational media corporations (TNMCs) have been actively expanding their businesses around the world for maximized profits (Zondi, 2022). China's accession to WTO in 2001 demonstrated further openness of the economy to international competition. The media firms' strategies in managing risk and increasing their capabilities in different markets seem to evolve over time with their growing knowledge and experience about local markets and the situation of external conditions (Ashagre, 2021). In the early 1980s, Western media firms' operations in Eastern and Central Europe, Asia and China, were largely confined to exporting media products. With the advent of new technology such as cable and satellite media, various licensing, distribution, and co-production agreements started to appear from the mid-1980s in the transitional and emerging economies in both Eastern and Central Europe and Asia (Kiba, Hgaza, VAighewi, Aké, Barjolle, Bernet & Frossard, 2020).

Africa has been portrayed as the Dark Continent in need of civilising, and its heathen peoples in need of enlightenment through enslavement and colonisation (Kiba et al., 2020). Africa has been presented as a continent in the difficult throes of trying to become more like the societies of the

Western Hemisphere. From the era of Africa's enslavement and colonial rule, traders, missionaries, adventurers and explorers have all played a role in perpetuating and disseminating certain images of Africa. According to Kalyango Jr (2021), despite the overwhelming qualities (light, colour, sound and motion) which empower media to command a major proportion of media consumption, the audience may reject its programmes if its content derails from their cultural traits (Fang, 2020). The multicultural nature of our society today exists as the effect of global media and the emergence of new technologies have paved way for access to diverse and remote cultures via our media, radio, internet, supermarkets and shopping centres. A society like Ghana which is culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse may recognize the enriching value of diverse cultures and values, and use them in its own way. But then, discussion of this scenario normally emphasizes on the negative effects rather than positive (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2018).

Most Westerners have never visited Africa and may never visit the continent. Yet there is a particular image of Africa in the Western mind. When one is asked to think of Western images that come to mind when thinking of Africa, the overall mental images are of primeval irrationality, tribal anarchy, hunger/famine, civil war, managerial ineptitude, political instability, flagrant corruption and incompetent leadership. Broadcasters acknowledge the fact that youths "split their enormous media time among many activities social networking, viewing video, exchanging Instant Messages, viewing graphics and photos, listening to music, watching MEDIA, playing games, looking up things, even catching up on the news often simultaneously, (Vahlberg, 2020). Hence, they tailor their programmes for so many platforms MEDIA, the internet, mobile devices, and desktop computers.

Information on Africa is often presented without a historical and analytical context to explain the roots of a conflict. On account of this lack of historical and analytical examination, most Western reports resort to attributing all conflicts in Africa to primordial irrationality and tribalism. Developments with mobile media and the global expansion of the internet have driven much of the growth in consumption of media programmes. Before anything else, the paper posits that slave trade, colonialism, and the missionaries are the citadel of Western civilization and culture in Africa (Kiamu & Musa, 2021). This paper is unable to ignore the fact that colonialism is the root of cultural imperialism and all other derivatives, including media imperialism, in Africa. The unstoppable wave of globalisation in Africa is a result of Western interference on the pace and

tempo of cultural growth and civilization in the continent. Though colonialism is now a thing of the past, Africa remains subjugated and dominated by the commodities and cultures of the colonial powers (Lando, 2020).

The experience of democracy and communication in Africa can be analysed in terms of three models: diffusion/modernisation (viewing the media as agents of modernity); dependency/dissociation (viewing new media technology as a continuation of ‘Third World’ dependence on the West); and participatory-communication (emphasising participation, cultural identity, empowerment and dialogue). While several cultural and media imperialist theories have been propounded, this study is anchored on the basis of cultural imperialism thesis (Kperogi, 2022). Cultural imperialism is most usefully viewed not as a tightly defined paradigm but as “a set of concepts, hypothesized linkages, and above all an optic that attempts to locate and clarify a wide range of problems” (Fejes, 2021). It refers to a global situation in which powerful culture industries and actors located almost exclusively in the West and, in particular, in the United States, dominate other local, national, and regional cultures and actors (Demont-Heinrich, 2019). It has been defined in a variety of ways in the past. In the early days, cultural imperialism, as a concept and focus of research was broad and ill-defined, “operating as evocative metaphor rather than precise construct, and has gradually lost much of its critical bite and historic validity (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 2019).

While new media technologies have a role in African democracy, their potential must be questioned in light of the continent’s economic, political and cultural realities. Systems of political communication in most African countries remain centralised. However, while African governments try to monopolise public spaces of popular expression, new spaces of freedom and dissent have been formed. Nonetheless, scholarly studies concerning the phenomenon cultural imperialism often focus on unequal flows among countries not typically conceived of as being in the so-called global periphery, for instance, on inequities in cultural flow from America into Ghana (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 2017). Cultural imperialism does indeed have important repercussions on political as well social norms and values embedded in the Ghana society. However, the concern here is not whether the phenomenon in world media culture is desirable or has advantages or disadvantages. Rather, emphasis is on the historical development of the phenomenon, reasons for its prevalence as well as the obvious but regrettable fact that it will continue to be part of the Ghanaian media arrangement for some time to come.

Western media produces majority of the media (film, news, comics, etc.) because they have the money and technology to do so (Kreeft, 2021). The rest of the world purchases those productions because it is cheaper for them to do so rather than develop and produce their own. Third world countries are therefore watching the media filled with Western world's ways of living, beliefs and thinking. The third world cultures then start to want to do the same things western in their own poor countries. Cultural imperialism is a key feature of Marx's critique of media theory, which he viewed as dominated by the ruling classes (Despain, 2020).

Via this domination, he argued, the ruling classes would best be suited to perpetuate their stranglehold on power. The ideas of the ruling classes are that in every age, the dominant material force in society, is at the same time its dominant intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production. In so far as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of each epoch, they do this in its whole range, hence, among other things, they regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age; thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch. Cultural imperialism is an intangible form of colonisation that was practiced by the Western empires that took over the world and exploited insidious and organic link between conquerors and the conquered (Snickars, 2020).

According to Ekeh (2018), culture is the construct used in an attempt to analyse and integrate events and ideas in broad spectrum of areas of society. Jekayinka (2021), states that from wider perspective, culture includes the total repertoire of human action which are socially transmitted from generation to generation. Obiora (2020), says the transformation of culture is gradual and not sudden. He (2020), contends that culture is a continuous process of change. It changes exactly the same way as the human being change. It is dynamic, learned, acquired and transmitted or diffused through contact or means of communication flow from generation to another. The Ghanan culture is observed to be fading out as a result of the acceptance and adaptation of the modernist's solution on to underdevelopment. One of such theories which relates to this subtle method of assault international communication is given by Lerner (2016).

The African cultural values are distinct and vary from one region to the other and Ghana being the largest African country, with over 200 tribes has the largest concentration of African cultures and civilizations. In fact, every Ghanan tribe has distinct cultural values which are evident in their

language, music, songs, dance, marriage rites, greetings, mode of dressing and many more. However, according to Nwagbara and Umor (2021), the Ghanaian culture is a complex subject that involves more than music and dancing or arts in general. It encompasses the material and nonmaterial aspects of culture.

The material includes the food, clothing building architecture, fine arts and any other physical items, while the non-material includes African philosophy, religion and beliefs, language, proverbs and idioms, morals, behaviour, character, ethics and many other creative aspects. An American Sociologist, Charles Ellsworth describes Culture as the collective name for all behavioural patterns socially acquired and socially transmitted by means of symbols; hence a name for distinctive achievements of human groups, including not only such items as language, tool making, industry, art, science, law, government, morals and religion, but also the material instruments or artefacts in which cultural achievements are embodied and by which intellectual cultural features are given practical effect, such as buildings, tools, machines, communication devices, art objects.

Bangladesh said they preferred to receive sex education via media sources, with 76% mentioning radio and 73% mentioning media as preferred sources of information (Kubaison, 2021). In Uganda, a study done by the Busoga Diocese's Family Life Education program found that both young and adult men, found information on their sexuality from the mass media, (Kamara, 2009). A study on Influence of mass media on adolescents' expression of sexuality and sexual behaviour in Nairobi Province, Kenya by M'imaita, (2017) showed that magazines are the most popular media that provide sexual information (42.6%). It is further revealed that though magazines are popular, more girls (63.2%) than boys (36.8%) had received sexual information from the media.

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

The influence of Western media programmes on the cultural values of Ghana youths have been said to be a serious problem facing Ghana. Some of the key issues resulting from western media programmes includes: Inadequate policy to guard the youths towards Western Media programmes, There is an erosion of the cultural values, The imitation of Western cultures especially the American cultures, The Ghana youths are faced with brain wash, therefore, if the above problems are not been taking care of, it will lead to a total destruction of the Ghana's culture. Media has become an integral part of our daily activities so much such that every state in Ghana has either a

State owned Media station, or National Media called the Ghana Media Authority or both; and each is popular in its state.

The Ghana media has joined the league of digital satellite broadcasting firms by launching a terrestrial broadcasting outfit named Startimes. The Multichoice's Digital Satellite Media is struggling to maintain and if possible increase its market share by making calculated efforts to edge out competition. With these activities you will realise that viewers are on a daily basis bombarded with programmes that erode local Ghana values and impose alien cultural traits which gradually becoming part of our heritage, In other words, while the local cultural values diminish, Western traits thrive this is cultural imperialism at its best. Based on the foregoing the study sought to evaluate the impact of media broadcasting on culture values and democratization process in sub-Saharan Africa: perspective from Ghana.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To evaluate the impact of media broadcasting on culture values and democratization process in sub-Saharan Africa: perspective from Ghana.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Furthermore Lim (2018) that the relationship of globalization and nationalism articulated by this format, together with the typical reality media strategy of blurring the boundaries between entertainment and ordinary life, work together to concurrently construct a desirable „national identity“. Her research found that audience members find a sense of national pride in Malaysian Idol despite the disjuncture of contestants performing international, non-Kenyan styles such as Rhythm and Blues. A study conducted by Nabi et al. (2013) among 252 residents in Tucson, Arizona found that younger people and “people with less formal education” were regular viewers of reality media but gender and race were not significant criteria. But the study also adds that each type of reality media attracts different types of audience age groups. Raphael (2009) notes that advertisers believe that reality media, especially tabloid, crime-time and emergency programs appeal more to pre-teenagers, seniors, and low-income viewers and fail to draw the attention of wealthy 18 to 35 year-olds. The enjoyment of watching reality media also has been connected with the opportunities of socialization that it affords between viewers as they discuss the performance of a particular contestant or develop mutual preference for a certain contestant to build social

affiliation“ (Lundy et al., 2008). In other words, this capacity of reality media to enable social affiliation“ impacts how viewers have conversations, watch and participate in reality media. Hill (2002) in his research on Big Brother audiences also found that the social and performativity aspects make it popular among the audience who most enjoyed watching the live „eviction show followed by seeing contestants talk about their experiences, watching the nightly MEDIA program, and talking about the program with friends/family” (Hill, 2020).

In the U.S.A, Several highly publicized murders in schools have alarmed the public and politicians. An average of 20-25 violent acts are shown in children’s media programmes each hour (Rubin, 2017). Significant association was found between the amount of time spent watching media during adolescence, with its exposure to violence, and the likelihood of subsequent antisocial behavior, such as threatening, aggression, assault or physical fights resulting in injury, and robbery (Huesmann and Taylor, 2006). Young men often name the mass media as their major source of reproductive health information. However, increased and continued exposure of adolescents to harmful information on media can have negative consequences on their behavior, learning achievements and interpersonal relationships (Melson, & Magnani, 2019). This is because mass media does provide models for emulation that sometimes influence adolescents beliefs, values and expectations. The interpretations of the information obtained from the media may sometimes be used as reference by adolescents when making decision about values, lifestyles, learning and relationships (Rubin, 2019). The impact of violent media on children and adolescents has been the subject of debate since the advent of mass media, and involved complex interplay of policies, politics, research, commercial interest and public advocacy. The U.S. Congress and federal agencies, prodded by professional organizations and child advocacy group, have for example claimed that violence in the entertainment media negatively affects children and have called for more self-regulation and social responsibility by the media industries (Rubin, 2018).

The study was informed by Social Learning Theory as formulated by Albert Bandura at Stanford University, specifies that mass media messages give audience members an opportunity to identify with attractive characters that demonstrate behaviour, engage emotions, and allow mental rehearsal and modelling of new behaviour. Albert Bandura's social learning theory suggests that observation and modelling play a primary role in how and why people learn. Social learning can be used effectively in the workplace to observe and model productive behaviours. However, social learning

does not occur passively. The behaviour of models in the mass media also offers vicarious reinforcement to motivate audience members' adoption of the behaviour. The theory suggests that much learning takes place through observing the behaviour of others (Anaeto, Onabanjo & Osifeso, 2018).

Social learning theory argues for imitative behaviour and learning from media, such behaviours seen as rewarding and realistic. It uses both imitation and identification to explain how people learn through observation of others in their environment. What this means is that we learn through media how people from other parts of the world live their lives and even how some individuals attain greatness in their chosen careers. Media often gives such people or individuals prominence and put them in the spotlight. The tendency to act like these individuals is very high because naturally people crave to associate or identify with successful individuals. Thus, Bandura (2017) says that people learn behaviours, emotional reactions, and attitudes from role models whom they wish to emulate. The so-called role models are called celebrities by the media, even when such people do not necessarily possess the kind of moral righteousness expected of them. But the media promote them beyond reason and the youths want to copy them and behave like such “celebrities”, who they perceive to be their heroes or heroines. This is true of majority of Ghanan youths who absorb hook, line and sinker, the Western cultural values of their heroes and imitate every aspect of their celebrities“ Western ways of life: food, fashion, music and the arts, language (especially, English language slangs), rather than using the standard English language grammar or worse still their Ghanan mother tongues.

According to Hämäläinen, Hoppitt, Rowland, Mappes, Fulford Sosa and Thorogood (2021), Social transmission of information is a key phenomenon in the evolution of behaviour and in the establishment of traditions and culture. The diversity of social learning phenomena has engendered a diverse terminology and numerous ideas about underlying learning mechanisms, at the same time that some researchers have called for a unitary analysis of social learning in terms of associative processes. Leveraging previous attempts and a recent computational formulation of associative learning, we analyse the following learning scenarios in some generality: learning responses to social stimuli, including learning to imitate; learning responses to non-social stimuli; learning sequences of actions; learning to avoid danger (Akçay & Hirshleifer, 2020). We conceptualize social learning as situations in which stimuli that arise from other individuals have an important

role in learning. This role is supported by genetic predispositions that either cause responses to social stimuli or enable social stimuli to reinforce specific responses. Simulations were performed using a new learning simulator program. The simulator is publicly available and can be used for further theoretical investigations and to guide empirical research of learning and behaviour.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study looked at the impact of media broadcasting on culture values and democratization process in sub-Saharan Africa: perspective from Ghana. Desk study review methodology was used for the paper where relevant empirical literature was reviewed to identify main themes. A very thorough review of empirical literature took place to expound on the impact of media broadcasting on culture values and democratization process in sub-Saharan Africa: perspective from Ghana.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The mass media in developing countries have been described as Trojan horses for the transmission of western values and for the perpetuation of cultural imperialism. Foreign programmes dominate our media screens. Programmes that have little or no redeeming values as far as our culture is concerned consistently feature on our media channels. Many third world countries including Ghana import over fifty percent of their media programmes. They do this, not from other developing countries which many be near self-sufficiency in media product as the United States of America but from the USA and Britain. Sadly enough, the mass media in Africa have become tools of advancing the subjugation of the black race. It is in view of this that this paper examines ways the media can be used to advance the African culture instead of promoting foreign programs that debase our culture. Consequent upon many years of colonization of Africa by developed nations, there has been a widening gap in their level of development. While the industrial world grows vibrantly in economic, social and political prosperity and stability, Africa has been left to wallow in abject poverty and economic retrogression.

The study discovered that more exposure to Western media content(s) tends to identify Western media stars as models and the improvement of local media movies in quality and standard will increase Ghana students' preference for local media product. A number of major conclusions may be drawn from the result and findings of this study. There is statistical significant relationship between how often one watches media and one's tendency to identify with western media star as

models. The results showed a positive relationship which means that as media exposure tends to go up, identification with Western media stars especially American media stars also tends to go up, suggesting that the average daily media broadcast content and home video cassettes contents in Ghana are more of foreign origin than local ones. Ghanaian students also tend to identify with Western media star as models for various reasons ranging from their perception of the programmes in which the stars appear as being of high product quality to the believe that the stars themselves exhibit qualities which are in tune with time. The colonial expansion of European states in Africa was usually accompanied by missionary efforts to proliferate Christianity and European civilization. A kind of benevolent tutelage of the 'inferior native' populations occurred that was particularly well-illustrated in Rudyard Kipling's *The White Man's Burden*. The direct consequences of the colonial expansion ranged from genocide that wiped out of large segments of a population, to the subtle destruction of African cultures.

Every culture has a dual tendency, a tendency towards stability and a tendency toward change. What is the contribution of culture to the development process? Surprisingly, on numerous occasions even normally intelligent and knowledgeable Africans erroneously and inadvertently conceptualize culture as 'drumming and dancing' and therefore fail to see any contribution culture makes or made to the struggle for socio-economic development. It must be noted however, that culture or 'the way of life of a people, their ideas, acts, and artifacts' is one of the main determinants of whether a society develops rapidly or slowly. Numerous studies by anthropologists show that the traditional values of a people are closely related to the pace with which they accept or reject the demands of modern industrial or commercial operations. Since no society in the modern world exists in a vacuum, it is the pre-established patterns of culture which, to a large extent, determine whether that society accepts or resists innovation and change and the speed with which this is done.

African culture is functionally linked to the popular media forms radio, MEDIA, and the press since they played a very significant role in their struggles against colonialism and exploitation. Since time immemorial, the media have helped to rescue, incorporate, preserve, and mediate elements which serve the interests of these popular classes. These interests include not only the people's aspirations, but also those factors which define their beliefs, expressions, and historical cultural development in general. Today, in spite of modern-day inclinations, the drum continues

to assemble school children in Ghana because of its importance as a medium with communal significance. Popular theater, for instance, are cultural performances by and for communities which give expression to that community's reality, aspirations, and diverse struggles for survival and development. Throughout history, popular theater forms such as dances, dramas, musical compositions, narratives, and others have played a role in the cultural struggles of the African peoples and their development.

Elements of African culture survived in its various languages, performing and other arts, religions, oration, and literature and depicts the strength of African culture. These elements also underscored African resistance to annihilation and cultural destruction. During the fight for independence, African theatre and cultural forms became elements of resistance and the struggle for independence. Songs, dances, and ritual dramas mobilized people to understand and reject their colonial situation. When personalities like the late Nnamdi Azikiwe, the First President of Ghana, came to Ghana to establish newspapers, they did so with the conviction that they needed to intensify the struggle against colonialism through other art forms and get the African intelligentsia-who then seemed to be alienated from their people-to see the reality on the ground.

There is no doubt that there exist on our screens movies than needed local media programmes. This has led to the growth of skepticism among the Ghanan youths in whom the destiny of this country lies. If the prevailing rate of weird dressing, sexual pervasion, gangsterism and general moral bankruptcy among Ghanan students is nothing to go by, then one can safely conclude this country is more or less destined to wanton self-destruction. All of these go to confirm that exposure to foreign media alters the original cultural identity of the Ghanan youths. They all show that exposure to Western media lead to low Ghanan self-image and a corresponding high projected self-image among Ghanan University students as a result of their perception of reality of life in the Western world especially American as shown on media.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In several ways and through several programmes, the media have continued to introduce distorted perception of values, presenting everything foreign as wise, admirable and civilized and everything local as primitive. Technology is not developed indigenously. Imports from developed nations have created malignant taste for foreign goods. The youths and even some adults construct fashion to mean bastardization of our culture, imitating dressing pattern in their daily lives. Africans no

longer control the factors that dominate their cultural identity. The media now determines what people value as their culture. The distorted media products beamed to Africa have succeeded in undermining our accepted moral values. African culture is under the battering influence of western imperialism. The perception of Westerners is based on the viewer's construction of social reality and the extent to which acceptance exists for media constructed image of Western reality and further the degree to which the viewers is prepared to substitute that reality and therefore identify for his or her own norms and values.

The study recommends that no further time should be wasted in apportioning blames to individuals or bodies for their roles in the cultural imperialism issue. The cultural media domination that does exist in the Ghana content can only take place within the complicity and social consent of the dominated cultures and Ghana students as well as other audience members seen to offer willing compliance. However, the following recommendations are put forward as means of putting an end to our cultural values genocide and communication neo-colonialism. The study also recommends that the Ghana journalists should be aware of their responsibilities towards the community which is the principle way of helping development. As long as they realizes that the conduct of their duty and bearing in mind what is good for the society, then they will always guard against feeding their audience with imperialistic messages. Finally, the broadcast houses should also create and project an in-house policy requiring that staff must air their indigenous name at least while on air. This will make people especially the students to identify themselves as Africans and not imitators of Europeans and Americans. This recommendation may sound trivial but it will likely go a long way to restoring the pride of being Africans or Ghana students.

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