Media Role in Cultural Education, Acculturation and Diffusion: An Ambivalence of Plausibility and Dysfunctional Trajectories

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Abstract
The paper examines the role of the media in communicating, projecting and transmitting cultural knowledge. Such roles are functional and plausible for human existence, interaction, appreciation of human diversity heritage, tolerance and linkage, especially in this age of increased cultural connectivity needs and diffusion. Of special note is the media role of purveyance and eulogy of cultures, bridging cultural gap between the archetypal age and the contemporary time – promoting cultural globalization and acculturation. However, through its tool of transmission and interpretation in the process of cultural education latent dysfunctions and trajectory implications loom large. Prominent among them are: sustenance of the culture of domination by the main groups, leading to media imperialism and quantitative imbalance of cultural education and knowledge. There are also the latent dysfunctions of ethnocentricism, stereotype, cultural alienation and exclusion. Against this backdrop the paper argues that such ambivalent trajectory indices influence the pattern of acculturation and diffusion across cultures and media audience. Therefore, it is imperative that the media balance its reporting bias against the background of empathy and appreciation of human diversity, on an equal platform and projection.

Keywords: Media Role; Cultural Education; Acculturation and Diffusion; Dysfunctional Trajectories

Introduction
Humans spend a good amount of quality time with the mass media – watching television, watching movies, surfing the internet, listening to the radio, playing music, reading books and newspapers etc. As if not enough, social networking sites bring millions of people together and keep them connected and busy. Thus, people across the globe are connected to each other, meeting in different languages, being exposed to different customs, norms and values and indeed, to different cultures.

Prior to the increasing cultural content and information technology advancements people hitherto had small-scale interactions, on a day-to-day basis within their proximity and neighbourhood. It was a cultural setting passed on, and formed largely by intimate interaction. The social system was founded on a monocultural pattern of existence. There is common language, behaviour patterns (norms), and values upon which members of the culture exchange meaning with one another in conducting their daily affairs. These similarities generally allow people to predict the responses of others to certain kinds of messages. Only the rare appearance of strangers briefly interrupted the routine of such hermetic existence.

Since the mid 19th century, we have come to live a culture of mediation. The press, film and cinema, television and radio and more recently, the internet, have developed to supply larger scale means of public link and interaction. So, now, our culture exists within a much wider mediated world. The introduction of the term ‘global village’ in the 1960’s illustrates how much our world has changed – a change that is facilitated by development in information technology.

Information that once traveled through error-prone and time-consuming methods now appears in the blink of an eye across a wide range of media. People in virtually all locations of the globe are more in touch than ever, and are more likely to traverse into cultures different from their own. The media outlets of television, radio, books, videos, music, magazines more than ever, bring us into contact with various and different peoples of the world other than our own, right into our private and public spaces. The media by virtue of its vast coverage widens human horizon and creates the extended possibilities for cross relations and lived experience of mankind, irrespective of race and cultural patterns.
The Media, Culture and Communication Process: The mass media is said to be the variety of channels through which mass communication takes place. Mass media involve those forms of media that are created, designed and used to reach very large audiences. The mass media is divided into electronic and print and, more recently, the interactive media. Each medium, electronic or print has its own peculiarities. Mass media are all forms of technologically mediated, institutionally organized and spontaneously expressed forms of social communication in the rural and urban areas which include radio, television, newspaper, magazines and most recently, the interactive media (Kornblum 2000:589; Hanson, 2005:5). Mass media involve a process in which professional communicators design and use media instruments to disseminate messages widely, rapidly, and selectively attending to audiences in attempt to influence them in a variety of ways (Dominick, 2009:7). In mass media, massages are intended for numerous individuals rather than for only a small number of individuals. The audience in mass communication is relatively large, heterogeneous, and anonymous to the source (Vivian, 2011:7-12). Added to this, the process of mass communication is a very complex one – more complex than interpersonal communication. This is because every single message sent through a mass medium is transmitted through an elaborate system of machines and individuals and organizations.

Culture and communication are inseparable. As Cooper et al (2007:12) explain, “Cultural norms and the media are inextricably linked”. Culture is made up of beliefs, values and norms and, these make up important variables that cement cultures. The media transmit cultural norms and values to its audience. This is one process of socialization, which help to unify a country and community of nations. Culture is the world made meaningful; and it is socially constructed and maintained through communication (Baran, 2012). Thus, mass communication contribute to the creation and maintenance of culture. The mass media are not only cultural storytellers, but also serve as a corpus of interacting fronts for global cultural integration. Certainly, the mass media have come to play dominant role in the creation and transportation of culture(s) to different parts of the world.

As cultural norms and values of others are being transmitted to media audiences, people grow in social adaptation abilities. Therefore, the media role of cultural transmission is an effective educational tool for relaying cultural knowledge to the masses.

People who want to know about other cultures and, especially migrants who arrive in foreign countries can get familiar with the new culture through this media role. In Nigeria for instance, in order to promote integration rather than assimilation, the Nigerian media create a shared sense of national identity amongst the ethnically, culturally, linguistically diverse peoples of the country. Nigeria’s cultural policy has evolved into a continuing search for a distinct cultural and national identity, which recognizes the ethnic components of the Nigerian population, the linguistic pluralism and the multicultural composition of the Nigerian nation. This is reflected in most media institutions in Nigeria. The Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) and African Independent Television (AIT) have among their policies the wearing of traditional and local attires during news casting. The news casters as a matter of policy wear their cultural attires while presenting the news items. AIT allots programme times for different cultural groups to showcase their cultural products and cultural identity. The NTA also has programmes that showcase different cultural diversities of the Nigerian nation. The Radio Nigeria Corporation has the same policy and tradition. Its introductory jingles at national news times co-opt the three Nigerian major ethnic languages (Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba).

As the media transmit cultures, all elements of a culture – history of a people, their religion, symbols, values, social organizations and languages are transmitted to all parts of the world as far as coverage is possible. Books, magazines, newspapers, radio, television, the cinema, records, tapes and videos, and other forms of mass communication occupy a central role in peoples’ lives and continue to advance, encourage and facilitate cross cultural interaction.

With the media, boundaries between social groups are breaking down. Of course, few people would deny that the nature of cultural experiences and human lifestyle in modern societies, have been profoundly affected by the development of mass communication, such that people can no longer predict the sort of lifestyle that others will adopt. Postmodernists are correct to argue that social behaviour is no
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longer shaped as it used to be by people’s background and their socialization (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:13). They hold that factors such as class, gender, and ethnic group, influence people a great deal. In this case the media have taken upper hand, hence people are much freer to choose their own identity and life style from the myriads of what the media give.

Accordingly, Baudrillard (1985:24-26) argues that it has become increasingly difficult to separate media images from anything that is even approximating to reality. Society has become so saturated with media images that people now sometimes confuse media characters with real life. This is simply to tell us the central place the media occupy in human life and existence.

For the media to communicate competently across cultures, media organizations and individual media practitioners must understand some of the ways in which cultures diverge in their worldviews, and learn intercultural competence skills. To do this effectively, the media must understand the basis of culture in order to effectively promote cross cultural interaction and understanding. It is in view of this that in the main, this essay steps from crystallizing the culture purveyance role of the media to identifying its dysfunctions and trajectories in promoting cultural knowledge, acculturation and diffusion. The aim is to echo a clarion call for media empathy to all cultures for balance of the acculturation and diffusion potency of the accounts. By definition, cultures are different in their languages, behaviour patterns, and values. So an attempt to use one’s self as a predictor of shared assumptions and responses to messages is unlikely to work. Certainly, because cultures embody such variety in patterns of perception and behaviour that are different, approaches to cultural education and information as matter of principle must guard against inappropriate assumptions of similarity and encourage the consideration of differences.

Theoretical Framework: Symbolic interactionism is the theoretical framework of the study. It’s thrust is on explaining behaviour and interaction against the backdrop of meaning people give them. That is the interpretive process of social behaviour which provide the basis upon which interaction is perceived and explained. In the main, the theory revolve around the following propositions: that mind, self, and society are not distinct forms, but aspects of personal and interpersonal interactions; that this is the prime vehicle leading to the individual’s mind and self; that the mind is conceived as the harbinger of the entrails of social coordinations in the individual; that behaviours are constructed by the person in the course of acting. Hence behaviour is not exclusively reactive in a mechanistic pattern; that the foremost channel for conduct is the conception of the situation by the actors and; that the self is conceived (by many interactionists), as consisting of both general (society) and unique (personal) definitions, (Manis & Meltzer (1972:575-77; LittleJohn 1978:56; Ritzer 2008:351-386). Consequently, the individual contains society within himself, however, not as a mere mirror of significant others. The propositions are processes in media roles. Upon these lie the appropriateness of symbolic interactionism as a frame to crystallizing media role and dysfunctions in cultural education, acculturation and diffusion.

2. Media Role in Cultural Interaction

Cultural Purveyance: The mass media is regarded as a major carrier of culture. The media serve as cultural storytellers and forum for cultural debate and cultural exchange. They also serve as cultural databank – as a storehouse or library that preserves peoples’ cultural heritage. The media transmit these heritage from generation to generation, beyond national frontiers. Indeed, cultural heritages including languages, marriage rites, burial rites, birth rites, dressing, greeting, music, folklore, religion, and other tangible cultural monuments, natural sites and cultural landscapes that would have died due to modernization, or western cultural influences (in the case of African cultures) are preserved, kept alive through the media databanking, and then transmitted across continents. This is the power of the media in regenerating and communicating the substance and plausibility of a culture.

Eulogy of Cultural Values: The media promote and transmit cultural values toward social integration. They play major role in implementing cultural policies and in helping to democratize culture. In modern times, the media is a channel to cultures and of cross cultural exchange, value eulogizing and creative
expression. These functions advertise a cultural pattern for borrowing by people of different cultural backgrounds.

**Bridging the Cultural Gap between the Archetypal and Contemporary Culture:** Although a great body of cultural expression maintains its traditional and interpersonal forms, it is also true that mass media in the modern world supply cultural fare, and shape the cultural experiences of many millions of people. For coming generations, they are creating a multicultural environment, hybrid of cultures from which new cultures might arise. In this function the media create the enabling social phenomenon for the understanding of cultural history, and synergy of the ‘old’ and the contemporary time.

**Promotion of Cultural Proximity and Globalization:** Inspite of geographical barriers to human proximity, the media and information technologies promote interaction between different cultures of the world. With state of the art communication technologies the media have reduced the distance between the ends of the world. Nations and people of the world are increasingly interconnected and mutually interdependent. Events taking place in any remote location can instantly be reported all over the world. In so doing, they make it possible for people to learn more about other people and different cultures. Obviously, we acquire lots of knowledge about other people, and share in their experiences through the media, beyond the boundaries our scope would carry us, and vice versa.

### 3. Mass Media Tools for Acculturation and Diffusion

Mass media instruments facilitate cultural interaction across the globe. Such cultural interaction promote acculturation and diffusion. This is done through the performance of its three major functions viz: Surveillance of the environment; correlation of different parts and elements of the society and transmission of culture from one generation to another, (Lasswell 1960:201; Haralambos & Holborn 2008:723-725). In the surveillance function, the mass media show us what is happening not only within our own culture but in other societies as well. Much of what we know about the world comes from what we learn from the media through the process of surveillance. Surveillance function is divided into two: beware surveillance (which informs us of threats and dangers) and instrumental surveillance (which transmit information that is useful and helpful in everyday life). In bringing to our knowledge what is happening across various segments of the world, and transmitting across the world what is happening around us, the mass media create an undeniably cross cultural contact and exchange, among peoples of the world. The interpretation function of the mass media is close to the surveillance function. Cultures are full of symbols. Symbols have localized and native rather that universal meanings and application. It is also an intrinsic character of symbols to be multi-interpretive as meanings are neither clear nor consistent over time and place and thus, are vulnerable to misinterpretation. Among the interpretation functions of the mass media is the study of the cultures of people, acquaintance with their symbols and knowledge their appropriate and contextualized meanings and, the ability to make the foregoing available to their audience, with a view to preserving them for posterity. Again, as cultures are based on symbols, the portability and traffic of symbols allow people to package and store them. But to transmit them, it becomes part of the function of the media to make them meaningful and accessible to people of other cultures, through its basic tool of interpretation. This promotes acculturation and linkage of humanity. Furthermore, the mass media do not just supply cultural facts and data. They also provide information on the ultimate meaning and significance of the cultural fact, events or data. Hence, media interpretation, analysis, comments, and opinions provide mass media audience an added perspective about cultural facts and events.

The transmission is another important tool of the mass media, especially in the traffic of cultural norms and values. This is often called the socialization function. Socialization refers to the ways an individual comes to adopt the behaviour and values of a group. The mass media portray different societies and their cultural values, and by watching, listening, and reading, people learn from other people. More than anything else, the media bring different cultural groups into interactive contact. In such process the media promote cultural alterations and modification. Implicitly, acculturation is also promoted in the
processes. Therefore, with the tool of transmission, the media loosen the barriers and conservative cultural patterns, while promoting, dynamism, tolerance and cultural diversity values in human existence. In other words, through the media tool of transmission, cultural changes take place, in response to contact with other cultures.

In linking people to different cultural messages beyond the scope of a group’s immediate environment, people who are not domiciled within their cultural space are also connected to the cultural information of their people. Again, the same cultural information is transmitted and shared with people who do not belong to that cultural group from which the cultural information is emanating. Thus, the media take cultural information from one group of people and share it to their vast audience. Of course, people may not truly identify and appreciate their own cultural backgrounds and assumptions until they encounter people from others. On the positive side, the media mediated cross cultural contact makes people appreciate their own very culture. On the negative side, it can also make people to denigrate their own culture in preference to other cultures. Similarly, since the audiences of mass media are often not known, media cultural messages may be acceptable to some and offensive to others. There is often no yardstick to measuring and protecting cultural sensitivities; the result of which may generate bad blood. The implication is that media report is capable of influencing patterns of acculturation and diffusion.

4. The Media and Dysfunctional Trajectories

Promotion of Dominant and Popular Cultures: The media play central role in the creation and sustenance of popular culture. Popular culture is a subcategory of culture. Historically, (until the 19th century), the term ‘popular’ was quite a negative thing, with overtones of vulgarity and triviality; that is, something not nice or respectable. In the modern world, the term means widespread, liked or at least encountered by many people. It has also come to mean mass-produced, i.e. made for the mass of people. There is a downside to this, of course, in that it can also be interpreted as commercial or trashy. This leads to the definition of popular culture as low culture, something not for the elite, but for the common people. Cultural value (high culture) has been traditionally associated with dominant or powerful groups – those who have appreciation of classical music, art, ballet, opera and so on. Low or popular culture is everything not approved of as high. It is vulgar, common, or easy. Popular culture has four significant characteristics viz it is produced by culture industries, it is different from folk culture, it is everywhere, and it fills social functions. While folk culture refers to the traditional rituals and traditions that maintain cultural group’s identity and which typically is not controlled by any industry and not driven by profit motives; popular culture refers to those systems or artifacts that most people share and know about. It includes forms of contemporary culture that are made popular by and for the people. So popular culture can and sometimes does, challenge the dominant cultural power group, (see Andersen Taylor 2004:70-75). Against this backdrop, television, music videos and magazines are systems of popular culture rather than systems of true cultural transmission. But if people are introduced to other cultures through adulterated cultural products, how would genuine cross cultural content, interaction, acculturation and borrowing be possible?

Similar to popular culture is mass culture. Mass culture is certainly not the same thing as popular culture, which often has to fight a difficult battle against cultural forms generated by a dominant minority and then disseminated on a mass scale. In speaking about mass culture, McQuail (2005:67) holds that the mass media flow often give rise to a state of cultural homogenization or synchronization, leading to a dominant form of culture that has no specific connection with real experience of the people in reference. That is why, mass culture may have overtone of approval when we think of its seemingly general acceptability or a pejorative ring when we deplore its shallowness.

The media enhance and facilitate cross cultural interaction, acculturation and diffusion. We can learn the language of a people, their values, and in fact their entire culture through the mass media. However, in the process of interpretation and presentation, to catch audience attention cultures are corrupted and destroyed instead of promote and preserve them. In this line of thought, the media sometimes, do not promote exact cultural information, rather it gives the audience adulterated cultural products (see Little
John 1978:325-352). This means that through the media people are introduced mainly to popular cultures. The implication is that dysfunctions loom large in the media roles of projecting culture, as discussed below.

**Media Imperialism:** One of the arguments against the relevance of the media to cross cultural linkage and interaction is the imposition of cultures on the rest of the world by the Western world, as opposed to a model of free cultural exchange and mutual benefits. The other is about the inevitable rise of global powers and formations, to the detriment of local cultures and differences. Media imperialism theory states that Western nations dominate the media around the world. Such domination has a powerful effect on Third World Cultures, as recipients of Western views; thereby destroying and replacing native cultures. In as much as we acknowledge the usefulness of the media to cultural linkage and exchange, there is the dysfunction of cultural imperialism. The trend leads to dependence, loss of autonomy and a decline in national or local cultures, to a seeming rise to what looks like a global culture, where global media exporters impose their cultural values on their global audiences. Part of the reason for this, is that imbalance in the flow of mass media content undermines cultural autonomy and holds back cultural development, thus, instituting cultural imperialism on the one side and cultural impoverishment on the other side. This is built on the view that Western civilization produces the majority of the media (film, news, comics, etc.) because they have the resources to do so, (Burton 2005:81-84). The rest of the world purchase those productions because it is cheaper than producing their own. Therefore, Third World countries are presented with media filled with the Western world’s way of living, belief and thought pattern, while its own culture is allowed to languish.

The trend of cultural imperialism continues at the country and state levels. In Nigeria, for instance, dominant cultures and ethnic groups, money bags, the elites, the political class etc, dominate activities and focus of the media. They constitute media gladiators. Their life styles become the norm and values that are often promoted by the media, to the near exclusion of minorities and other sub-cultural groups. Through media imperialism, smaller countries and minority groups, are losing their identity, due to the dominance of the media by larger nations or dominant groups. It can be equated to small community shops closing down due to large superstores moving in, taking over and having monopoly. As the larger media corporations begin to take over, smaller media companies are either being forced out or swallowed up. When the majority of media available in one’s country is that produced by a different, more dominant nation or dominant group, it is suggested that the culture of that larger nation or group, along with its interests, displace that of the home country or other ethnic groups.

Cultural influences can be seen by the “receiving” culture as either a threat to or an enrichment of its cultural identity. It seems therefore useful to distinguish between media imperialism as an active or passive attitude of superiority, and the position of a culture or group that seeks to complement its own cultural production, considered partly deficient, with imported products. The imported products or services can themselves represent, or be associated with, certain values, such as consumerism. The “receiving” culture does not necessarily perceive this link, but instead absorbs the alien culture passively. Of all the areas of the world adversely affected by media imperialism, Africa is probably the most notable. In the expansive “age of imperialism” of the nineteenth century, European colonization of Africa led to the elimination of many cultures, worldviews, and epistemologies. When political colonization ended with the independence of many African nations, media colonization replaced it, and this is the result of media imperialism. In effect there is gross imbalance in acculturation and diffusion between the cultures of the West and Africa.

**Quantitative Imbalance of Culture:** Imbalance is created by the disparity between the volume of news and information emanating: from the developed world and intended for the developing countries, and the volume of the flow in the opposite direction, from dominant groups/class intended for sub-groups among nations of the world. Greater amount of world news – flow, originates from the major news agencies of the developed countries with less and distorted reports from the developing countries. At times communities in the developing world are presented in the most unfavourable light, such as stressing
crises, strikes, street demonstrations and riot, violence, crime, disease and ridicule. On the national levels, major ethnic and dominant groups have the same influence, dominance and control. In Nigeria, for instance, major ethnic groups, the political class and the rich dominate the media, creating imbalance in class culture information. Again, in Nigeria the media coverage are only concentrated in cities and urban centres, while little is hard about the rural populace and cultures. In other words, the poor, the common citizens and the rural culture suffer media exclusion. This is one reason why the popular indigenous languages and culture in Nigeria are those of Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba, the dominant ethnic groups.

Regeneration of Colonial Culture and Heritage: The present-day information system crystallize a form of political, economic and cultural colonialism in which world events are covered only in so far as it suits the interests of certain societies; the criteria governing selection are consciously or unconsciously based on the political and economic interests of the transitional system and of the countries in which the system is established. This is more so with western media. They disregard the impact of their news beyond their own frontiers. There is often no consideration of cultural sensitivity. They even ignore the important minorities and foreign communities living in their national territory, whose needs in matters of information are different from their own. Similarly, the local media, as in the case of Nigeria news coverage, information and ideas, opinions get media attention as long as they are presented in the light of the west, foreign institutions and or they serve the interest of the elite and ruling class. Against this backdrop, there is media hegemony such as opposing social evolution and transmitting to the developing countries messages which are harmful to their cultures, contrary to their values, and detrimental to their development aims and efforts. Consequently, national media also promote misleading cultural education which culminate into imbalance of acculturation and diffusion, in favour of alien culture.

5. Latent Implications of the Dysfunctional Trajectories

Ethnocentrism: This is the belief that one’s own culture is superior to others. “Ethnocentrism becomes a barrier when it prevents people from even trying to see another’s point of view, through another’s “prescription lens,” (Martin and Nakayama, 2005:46). In many reports, the media promote and propagate one cultural group or one ideological belief over another, with the belief that the culture in question is superior to all others. This may be the result of a judgmental belief of media professionals or proprietors who not only are media gate-keepers but also media agenda setters. In effect people’s perception, value and acceptance of such culture is affected.

Stereotyping: Stereotypes are widely held beliefs about a group of people that serve as a form of generalization – a way of categorizing and processing information we receive about other people in our daily lives. For Martin and Nakayama (2005:48), stereotypes are mental shortcuts that help people interact with others from different cultural groups. The media tend to portray cultural groups in stereotypic ways, and stereotypes persist because the media choose not to pass along information that would contradict stereotypes. Stereotypes may be positive but are potentially harmful when they are held rigidly. The implication is that a particular culture is erroneously portrayed and undermined. This is a protracted challenge Nigeria and other third world countries are facing in the midst of world cultures.

Prejudice: Prejudice is a negative attitude toward a cultural group based on little or no experience. It is a prejudgment of sorts. Whereas stereotypes tell us what a group is like, prejudice tells us how we are likely to feel about a group (Martin and Nakayama, 2005:50). Prejudice may arise from a personal need to feel positive about one’s own group and negative about others, or from perceived or real threats. These may be genuine threats that challenge a group’s existence or economic/political power, or symbolic threats in the form of intergroup value conflicts and the accompanying anxieties. It is difficult to correct or reverse prejudice once it has been formed by a group against a culture. Here lies another latent problem underpinning biased and poor quality reporting of culture in the media.
**Discrimination:** The attitude that promote stereotyping or prejudice – the overt actions to estrange, neglect, distance or malign one culture or people from the media in preference to others is called discrimination. Discrimination may be based on racism or any other “isms” related to belonging to a cultural group (sexism, ageism, elitism). Discrimination can be interpersonal, collective and/or institutional, (Martin and Nakayama 2005:51-52). The media are often accused of institutionalized or collective discrimination, whereby cultural groups are systematically denied equal participation and access or rights in informal and formal ways. Consequently, imbalance in cultural acceptability and diffusion is sustained.

**Cultural Domination:** The implications so discussed about the latent dysfunctional trajectories of media information on culture go a long way to diminish a culture and the way it is accepted or rejected. Cultural identity is endangered by the overpowering influence of foreign or alien cultures on local cultures. The media bring about cultural domination when they create the platform upon which one culture dominates others, and those other cultures become assimilated into the dominant culture, or rendered absolute. A further latent implication of this dysfunctional trajectory is misleading parochialism which enhance cultural stagnation. A culture does not develop by retreating into its shell; but by free exchange – acculturation and diffusion with other cultures. Contact and interaction between cultures must be based on a free exchange and mutual respect. To ensure this, the media must balance cultural information credibility.

**Cultural Alienation:** The mass media reflect inequalities. In many countries, like Nigeria, the large number of languages used makes it difficult to produce programmes for all linguistic groups hence depriving some people from sharing in information source and entertainment. In most places, particularly in developing countries, possession of a television set is a privilege of urban dwellers. But even if programmes reach outside the main production centres, the audience is often culturally disadvantaged as the media content may be completely alien to the spectator’s background.

Furthermore, even though communication media have proliferated in recent decades and brought the external world to millions of people previously living in isolated communities, or who had but simple connections with the outside world through conventional communication channels, yet, this has generated two major concerns; namely the threat of the quality and values of culture transmitted; and the indiscriminate opening of doors to new experiences and impressions by the media, which sometimes alienate people from their own culture.

With the speed, coverage and impact of the media explosion, certain harmful effects have been observed. For many people, the conception of reality is obscured or distorted by messages conveyed by the media. Most media products are culturally abominable to others. Most media products may exhibit cultural radicalism and may be morally outrageous in other cultural settings. For instance, in Nigeria and other African traditional societies, where nudity is intolerable, the intrusion of media with nude and pornographic pictures obliterate sacred norms and cultural sensitivity. Indeed, media products are characterized by vast cultural insensitivities; which unfortunately have often no way of checkmating.

Again, increase in the volume of information and entertainment has brought a certain degree of homogenization of different societies while paradoxically, people are more cut off from the society in which they live as a result of media penetration into their lives. The introduction of new cultures, particularly through television into traditional societies has seldom failed to shake centuries-old customs, time-honoured cultural practices and simple life styles, social aspirations and economic patterns. Modern communications are often accompanied by negative influences which radically disturb established orders. At the extreme, modern media trample on traditions and distort centuries-old socio-cultural patterns. This trend alienate some people and make them feel lost like a planet off its orbit.

The process develop to cross cultural frontiers as nations like Nigeria get a considerable portion of their film and television programmes from abroad, outside their cultural space. Language of communication is another areas of cultural bias and dysfunctional trajectory of the media in the process of cultural information. Where numerous groups of the population are linguistically cut off
from each other, cohesion in cultural, economic and political spheres is virtually impossible. Here, language is no minor communication problem. Those whose languages are not used by the media are excluded and deprived of their right to participate in national affairs, culturally, politically and socially. Think of this situation in the Nigeria media space, where there are over 250 ethnic groups with different languages; where a significant number of the people do not understand English language, the official national language. The implication is that many Nigerians are cut off from getting or passing media reports that concern their culture, first hand.

6. Conclusion

The essay is a critically spotlight and assessed the role of the media in cultural information exchange, and acculturation and diffusion. No doubt, the media is a major player in disseminating knowledge of cultural patterns and values, and projecting them for appreciation and borrowing. The media does not just serve as a mere instrument, rather it is an identity in its own right, and can compete with national governments in respect to its power and influence to alter the nature and essence of human societies and cultures. It is impossible to ignore the great transformation and evolution taking place in human societies due to the media’s information gathering contact and exchange network. However, while the media perform the plausible function of cultural reporting and education there are dysfunctional trajectories beneath the processes. Thus, the media contribute to weakening the identity values of various cultures and societies. Hence, there is a latent media pursuit of a single cultural world. The culture sponsored by the Western media is the culture, which dictates to the society ‘what to eat’, ‘what to wear’, ‘how to live’, ‘what to think’ and ‘what to know’. The enormous chain of global communication institutions and its allies in the world system of capitalism have transformed the majority of ordinary people into obedient consumers, without identity (of culture) or ability to command their destiny. This is the experience of Nigeria and many other African and third world countries. Media institutions tend to remove spatial and temporal boundaries in order to eliminate identity barriers. The successful implementation of this task have paved the way for the strategic goal of the West to conquer cultures through exploitation of minds, the draining of brains in the developing countries and injecting a superficial sense of cultural growth.

The media play a major part in prevailing channels and opportunity for people to learning more about other cultures and for interaction exchange and diffusion of other cultures. With the media, a multicultural environment is created within societies. Within such a cultural setting, interaction that happens between cultures create the possibilities of culture shock (feelings of confusion, distress, and sometimes depression that can result from the psychological stress caused by the strain of rapidly adjusting to an alien culture); culture loss (loss of cultural traits, like the disappearance over time of certain words and phrases in a language); culture death (the complete disappearance of a culture as a result of the total acculturation); cultural relativity (suspending one's ethnocentric judgments in order to understand and appreciate another culture); acculturation (process by which a culture is transformed due to the massive adoption of cultural traits from another society); enculturation (the process of cultural learning for integrating to a particular culture); cultural synergism (the capacity of cultures to qualitatively and quantitatively enrich one another by opening up and exchange of pattern, value system and products); cultural assimilation (whereby people are likely to give up their culture and taking on the traits and garbages of another, either as a separate culture or a compromise culture). Similar to this, is cultural pluralism, which involves maintaining one’s particular culture in the midst of larger society of cultural interactions.

Furthermore, latent dysfunctions of media role in cultural knowledge and appreciation loom large. Some cultures are submerged in the location of suppression, alienation, discrimination, exclusion, imperialism etc. Since the media role in cultural education, and promoting acculturation and diffusion is inevitable in the social phenomenon of human diversity and interaction impulse, what is required is sensitive and increased cultural censorship by the media, toward balanced reporting, in the spirit of empathy to people’s culture, especially when such culture is different from theirs.
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