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**FOREIGN TELEVISION PROGRAMME COMMUNICATION; AN AGENT OF WESTERNIZATION TO
PORT HARCOURT YOUTHS**

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Abstract

Television has been a very popular means of public communication among a/l nations of the world with the youths as one of targets of influence. This is because television as part of its potentials produces both audio and visuals. There are hardly at present any developing nations that its members do not have access to television. The youths in every society still remains the target among television viewers as they do not only watch to be informed and entertained but they also watch or view to emulate the lifestyles of celebrities. It is on this basis that this study examines foreign television an agent of westernization to youths in Port Harcourt, Rivers. The foreign television programmes are responsible for the prevalence of foreign attitudes and habits among youths. This study driven by cultivation theory which suggests that heavy television viewing "cultivates" perception of reality consistent with the view of the world presented in television programmes. Most youths in Port Harcourt believe that whatever they view on foreign television programmes are reality and so to them, there is need to cultivate the habits, attitudes, behavior and values demonstrated in foreign Television programmes.

Keywords: Foreign, Television, Programmes, Agent Westernization, Port Harcourt Youths

Background of the Study

Television as it were has been the most powerful media of mass communication. This is as a result of its audio-visual potentials which makes people believe whatever they view television. The impact of the television on human beings, particularly the youths cannot be over-emphasized. Donald and Christine (1991) say that television exerts powerful influence on the way people perceive, think about, and ultimately act in their world. This determines the behavior, attitude and the nature of a person. Dennis and Kraus (1996) opine that television shapes our thinking influences our attitude and opinions and contributes towards particular behavior such as voting and buying certain goods. No wonder it is generally believed that the media of mass communication are veritable agents of socialization. Dominic (1993) says that the media play significant role in socialization.

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However, it should be noted that youths are fond of foreign programmes. Akindele and Lamidi (2001) states that 'youths are heavy viewers of foreign television programmes in Nigeria and that increases the risk of developing some behavioural problems Violence, subscription to pornography, drug taking, indecent dressing, indecent hair dos, indecent language among others. All of these behavioural problems are deviance of the indigenous culture of Nigeria as a country.

Westernization is the adaptation or influence of western (European) culture among societies across the globe in areas such as .lifestyles priorities, education, values, economics, clothing, politics, entertainment, etc. Culture is defined as the sum total of knowledge, attitudes and habitual behaviour patterns shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society. This is one out of the many definitions of culture. It is observed that the Nigerian culture is fading out as a result of the acceptance and adaptation of the modernist solution to underdevelopment otherwise known or referred to as westernization.

According to Gerbner, in his concept of empathy, he states at inhabitants of developing nations must learn to empathize with the west for their society to be transformed to a modern society. Schramm (1990) on the other hand, developed a model in which he equates the level of social development of communication to various nations. Access to these modern mass media (radio, television, films, telephones and newspapers) is linked to individual modernity. Nigeria and other developing countries have responded to these findings by reducing the cost of radio and television so that it will be affordable by the masses. The television programmes provide powerful models for youths, and opportunities for observational learning.

In relation to this, studies have shown that the average Nigerian youth watches thousands of dramatized attitudes and fashions on television. Foreign programmes shown on cartoon network, ESPN-Expanded Sports Network Channel, Zee World, etc have continued to make the youths behave like the television characters. It is my believe that television, especially American television acts as a strategic 'weapon' aimed at overpowering the cultural values of Nigerian youths thereby inculcating into them the western attitudes and methods of operation.

Statement of the Problem

With the recent trend prevalent among the youth in Port Harcourt and Nigeria at large as regards modernization. Almost all Nigerians youths strives to live like the foreigners (people in western countries) in the way they speak, dress, behave, walk, eat, etc. One may wonder at what should be responsible for such mimicking of the white men in virtually all we do. Foreign television programmes have been identified as a major source of westernization'

among youths. This has led to a decline in our indigenous Nigerian way of doing things such as dress code, speaking of our local dialects, methods of greetings and so on.

However, this trend is consistent with the cultivation theory which says that frequent exposure to certain media contents leads audience to behave according to what they are exposed to. (MC Quail, 2005). Foreign television programmes have become a serious problems confronting our youths in Nigeria in that it has brought about the inability of our youths to do things in our own cultural way and over reliance on what they view on television programmes which most times are fantasies. Hence to what extent has this enhance the youths,

Significance of the Study

The study is relevant to Nigerian society especially the youths as it will be of benefits across all class of Nigerian citizens. This study will enable youths to understand the impact and spiral effect of foreign/international television programmes on their way of life more especially as it has to do with their behaviour, speech, dressing, speaking etc. and the implication to our Nigeria cultural system. This study will also educate the government and policy makers on the need to improve the content of our Nigerian owned television stations so as to make their programmes more attractive, educative and more entertaining. More so the professional significance of this study lies in the fact that media practitioners should censor and produce programmes that will not lead to a derail of our cultural and moral values among the youths. Academically, the study will add to the existing body of literature on foreign television programmes as an agent of westernization.

Aims and Objectives

The general objective of this study is to examine to what extent the foreign television programmes has become an agent of westernization of Port Harcourt youths. The specific objectives include:

1. To find out to what extent Port Harcourt youths are exposed to foreign television programmes.
2. To find out what motivates Port Harcourt: youths towards viewing foreign television programmes.
3. To examine to what extent, foreign television programmers have changed the behaviour and attitudes of Port Harcourt youths.
4. To find out if foreign television programmes are responsible for the westernization of Port-Harcourt youths.

Research Questions

Based on the objective of the study, the following research questions were generated to guide the study.

1. To what extent are Port-Harcourt youths exposed to foreign television programmes?
2. What motivates Port-Harcourt youths towards foreign television programmes?
3. To what extent have foreign television programmes affected the behaviour

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and attitude of Port-Harcourt youths?

4. Have foreign television programmes brought about westernization of Port Harcourt youths?

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant relationship between youths and foreign television programmes.
2. There is no significant relationship between foreign television programmes and westernization.
3. There is not significant relationship between youths and westernization.

Literature Review

We live in a very dynamic society. Where every individual wants to turn out the best among his/her peers. As a result of this, virtually everyone looks out for avenues or sources where he/she can learn attitudes that will make them outstanding. This creates the passion to always view television programmes. Infact from the moment we wake up until we go back to our beds we avail ourselves the opportunity to view numerous foreign television programmes. At the end of the day, you avail yourself of the latest news, music, and entertainment via television channels. The youth of today are perhaps the most significant users of the television, Burtina (2005) posits the idea that as intelligent as we are, with the freedom and ability to make own choices, the issue of how much influence the media have over our decisions can be put to a test. This could be one of the stringent issues that can necessitate a lengthy explanation and provide a good avenue that there can be no doubt that the media influence us in innumerable ways. Mass media play a vital role in the lives of the people in the society. They are tools for news, information, promotion, and a platform for sharing of ideas. They have a unique capability to dramatize, to focus, *and to* reinforce and importantly, to ensure that people participate in a process called bottom-up communication.

Television has the potentials to generation both positive and negative effects and many studies have looked at impact of television on society, particularly on children and adolescents. According to Joyce (2008), an individual child's developmental level is a critical factor in determining whether the medium will have positive or negative effects. Youths like watching television.

Joyce (2008) notes that they cherish it extensively. One could conclude that they spend more time watching television. These vary between different age groups and cultures. This is relevant when studying the effects of excessive television exposure on the society. She states that relationship exists between youth's high exposure to imported programmes and increase in the number of immoral and licentious acts.

Culture is the customs and beliefs, arts, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group. Kluckhan (1905-1960), an influential American anthropologist defines culture as the total way of life

commonly followed by the members of a society. Taylor (1871) explains that culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, moral laws, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. Also Heartzas cited in Taylor (1991) notes that culture is a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbolic forms by means of which people perpetuate and develop their knowledge about attributes of life. As Baran (2002) puts it:

Culture is the world made meaningful. It is socially constructed and maintained through communication. It limits as well as liberates us. It differentiates and as well as unites us.

It defines our realities and thereby shapes the way we think, feel and act.

Morgan (1988) on the other hand, avers that even if the media systems are not the most powerful for social change, they are in many cases the most pervasive and visible agents. The need to see the chances of foreign media influence in abrasionary terms and not: in terms of the fear of complete cultural domination or substitution cannot be overemphasized. In any case, such effects should not be seen as the consequences of media agents alone; rather as Varan (1988) notes, we can begin to understand this exchange as part of an interaction between agents and cultural terrain which becomes part of people's daily life. Defleur (1991) observes that people hum the latest tunes, makes the latest hair style of popular artist, and try to dress like them. These media output: is an integrated and importance part of popular cultures.

Daramola (2005) explains that culture of dressing in Nigeria was unique and attractive before civilization. For instance, for the Yoruba people of Nigeria, it was common in the past to see people dressing in "Aso-Oke" to festivities. But today they simply dress in lace materials and "buba" with head ties (for women) and "buba" and "agbada" (for men) which are not necessarily "Aso-oke". The hitherto offending trousers by female members of the society are now in vogue, to the extent that youths now wear torn trousers, crop tops, exposing their stomach and other sensitive part of their body, all in the name of fashion resulting from westernization.

Okechukwu (2012) conducted a study on "influence of western media on the dressing pattern of undergraduates in Nigeria", the study aimed at finding the extent to which western media have influenced the dressing pattern of youths in Port Harcourt. The study recommended that programme producers should add some creativity to their programmes, so as to capture the attention of the people thereby exposing local culture and government should make room for cultural promotions in colleges and universities, to sensitize them so as to appreciate their culture.

Furthermore, Ejiogii (2000) conducted a study on "the influence of media imperialism on the dress code of youth in Owerri municipal". The study aimed at finding whether Owerri municipal youths dress sense is influenced by content of foreign TV programmes. The study adopted the survey research method. The study recommended that regulatory agencies in Nigeria should ensure that media organizations comply with the mandatory local

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programmes quota as contained in the NBC Code. In other words, the present study will explore the foreign television programmes as an agent of westernization among youths in Port Harcourt to check, the similarities or differences in its findings.

Methods and Materials Result

The study adopted a survey research. Survey is a research design that focuses on a representative sample derived from the entire population of study. The population of this study comprises a cross section of students in four higher institutions located in Port Harcourt. The institutions are the University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and Captain Elechi Aniadi Polytechnic. The total number of students selected is 400, 100 from each school selected at random. The instrument of data collection was the questionnaire. It was divided into two sections. Section A contained personal information (Age, sex, department, faculty, level) while Section B contains the subject matter of the study. Also, observation schedule was used as a supplementary instrument. This was in a bid to observe the dressing of the students within the periods of the study. Data was properly presented in tables with the use of simple percentages and for descriptive purpose. The data was based on the response from respondents in the various institutions.

Results

RQ1: To what extent are youths in Port Harcourt exposed to foreign television programmes?

Data showed that 325 (81.25%) respondents confirmed that Port Harcourt youths are exposed to foreign television programmes as such almost every household have cable satellite receiver which has more of foreign TV stations. However, 51 (12.75%) respondents were moderately, exposed to foreign TV programmes. While 24 (6%) could not qualify their level of exposure to foreign TV programmes. Hence we conclude that Port Harcourt youths are highly exposed to foreign TV programmes. In the opinion of the researcher, too much exposure to foreign media will to a large extent have significant impact on Nigerians dress code that will certainly cause abandonment of our culture, tradition and values for foreign dress. If one go theorize with the cultivation theory, then it becomes glaring why dressing identity of Nigerians are being speedily replaced with foreign based style if dressing.

RQ2: What motivates Port Harcourt youths towards foreign television programmes?

The answer to this research question revealed that 275(68.75) respondents of Port Harcourt confirmed they were motivated towards foreign TV programme to improve their general knowledge and that is where the source of westernization is centred. However 88 (22%) of respondents said they were motivated towards foreign TV programmes for fun. 37 (9.25%) respondents said

it was a hobby. Does it mean that youths in Port Harcourt cannot unwind and be entertained by home-based media content?

In my opinion, certain motivations to foreign media will have significant impact on Port Harcourt youths' dress code because that is where they claim to learn recent trends on dress code (westernization). However over dependence on foreign media content can also be largely due to inferiority complex. Africans have been mentally colonized into believing that anything labeled Africa is inferior to foreign base. If more media consumers depend on foreign programmes, how will our domestic media industry bloom?

RQ 3: To what extent *have* foreign television programmes affected the attitude and behaviour of Port Harcourt youths?

From the different responses, the answer to this research question revealed that 254 (63.25%) respondents of Port Harcourt youths attitude on dress code are to a large extent influenced by content of foreign TV programmes. The finding of Konkwo (2004) asserted that a situation of large western media export to Nigeria is likely to compel Nigerians to know and believe more about west than Nigeria. Besides, there are these anxieties over the state of culture and morals or the power of the media to brainwash or educate. However 95 (23.75%) respondents said foreign TV programmes has influence their attitude and behaviour especially on dress code. It is the view of the researcher that too much exposure to foreign media will to a large extent have significant impact on dress pattern of Port Harcourt youths and this has resulted in them dressing indecently exposing sensitive parts of their body. While 52 (13%) cannot say if foreign TV programmes has influenced their attitude on dress code.

RQ4: Has foreign television programmes brought about westernization to Port Harcourt Youths?

The answer to this research question revealed by 201 (50.25) respondents forming the majority confirmed that foreign programme has influenced their choice of dress code. However 114 (28.5%) respondents disagree that TV programme has influenced their choice of dressing. While 85 (21.25%) can't say if it has influence on their dressing and attitudes. For the researcher, the reason for the present finding is because people believe more in the west (westernization) and so feel foreign television programmes will enable them learn more of recent trends on dress code and this certainly will take cur tradition into extinction.

Results and Conclusion

It was revealed that 81.25% of Port Harcourt youths are exposed to foreign TV programmes, as almost every house hold do have cable satellite receiver which has more of foreign TV stations. Also, 75 of youths in Port Harcourt. Are motivated towards foreign TV programmes to improve their general knowledge and that is where they learn the recent trends on dress code. Again 63.25% of Port Harcourt youths attitude on dress code is to a large extent influenced by content of foreign TV programmes. Finally, foreign TV programmes i as westernized Port Harcourt youths in their dress code, hair styles and speech. 50.25% of the respondents attest to this.

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In conclusion, youths in Port Harcourt have been influenced by western television programmes on their dress code to a large extent of 50.25%.

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