ANALYSING THE CULTURAL INFLUENCE OF WESTERN CABLE TELEVISION CHANNELS ON NIGERIAN AUDIENCES: A CASE STUDY OF VIEWER PERCEPTIONS AND BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES

Alphonsus A. Adebiyi, Kehinde G. Adeosun,

Hannah O. Adejumobi, and Ibraheem A. Alao.

Communication and Language Programme, Institute of Communication and General Studies, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria.

*Corresponding Author's Email: adebiyiaa@funaab.edu.ng

ABSTRACT: *Cultural imperialism refers to the dominance of media content from developed countries, often characterized by technological and economic superiority, which influences the culture of developing countries and leads to a preference for foreign cultures. This study analyses the cultural influence of Western cable television channels on Nigerian audiences, focusing on viewer perceptions and behavioural changes. Specifically, the research examines how channels such as DSTV, GOTV, and Star Times shape viewers' cultural preferences and behaviours. Employing a mixed-method approach, the study combines quantitative data from surveys and qualitative insights from interviews. Respondents were selected through purposive and random sampling, targeting individuals with access to cable television. The relevance of cultural imperialism theory is evaluated in the context of Western television's influence on Nigerian audiences. Findings reveal that while Western television channels are accessible, their influence on Nigerian viewers is limited. Instead, viewers strongly prefer local cultural elements such as music, language, dress, and locally relevant information. Observed behavioural changes, such as shifts in entertainment choices and social practices, also indicate a selective adoption of foreign content, often filtered through a local lens. Additionally, the study identifies erratic power supply as a significant factor limiting the impact of cultural imperialism in Nigeria. These findings challenge the assumption of Western media dominance and suggest that local culture remains resilient despite global media influences. The study's implications highlight the need for policies that support local content production and cultural preservation in the face of globalization.*

KEYWORDS: Cultural influence, Imperialism, Western cable television, Nigerian, Audiences.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Television serves as a crucial source of both entertainment and education in Nigeria, playing a significant role in the daily lives of many Nigerians. Amid economic challenges and tough living conditions, people often turn to media—such as radio, television, newspapers, and new media—for information and as a coping mechanism for stress. According to Pavlova and Silbereisen (2015), referencing Nishino and Larson (2003), activities like watching entertainment programs on television are considered passive leisure, providing pleasure and relaxation that helps manage stress. The audio-visual nature of television, combining visual and auditory stimuli, makes it particularly engaging and effective in capturing the attention of viewers.

Television remains a dominant medium for entertainment, with users valuing programs that span various genres, including drama, movies, comedy, music, talent shows, and talk shows (Gunter, 2010). In addition to entertainment, television is a powerful tool for education. Naveed (2011) highlights the global success of television as an educational medium, adaptable to formal, non-formal, and informal education settings. Moreover, cable television channels, with their 24-hour news cycles, offer continuous coverage of local, national, and international events, shaping public opinion and influencing political discourse (Gunter, 2010).

Beyond its role in entertainment and education, television also plays a significant part in promoting cultural values, norms, and practices worldwide. Broadcasting in indigenous languages and showcasing local cultures are seen as essential for national unity and cultural preservation (Researchcage, 2023). Yusuf (2015) argues that television can influence audience perceptions of language and culture by promoting indigenous languages. Similarly, Tugbokorowei (2008) asserts that nations that align their social, political, economic, and technological development with their cultural values are more likely to achieve meaningful progress.

In Nigeria, the rise of Western cable television channels like DSTV, GOTV, and Star Times has introduced global content to local audiences, raising questions about their impact on cultural preferences and behaviours. While television has been recognised for its role in promoting local culture, the increasing accessibility and popularity of Western channels present a potential challenge to this cultural preservation. This study aims to analyse the cultural influence of these Western cable television channels on Nigerian audiences, specifically examining how they impact viewer perceptions and behaviours. By assessing the relevance of cultural imperialism theory in this context, the study seeks to understand whether Western television content significantly influences Nigerian viewers' cultural preferences and behaviours, or if local cultural elements remain resilient in the face of global media influences.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing proliferation of Western cable television channels on Nigerian platforms, such as DSTV, GOTV, and Star Times, raises significant concerns about their potential cultural influence on Nigerian viewers. These channels often portray themes such as gun violence, sexuality, affluence, and biased representations of Nigerian and African contexts, which may shape the perceptions and behaviours of local audiences. According to media cultivation theory, prolonged exposure to such content can gradually influence viewers' worldviews, potentially leading to shifts in cultural preferences and social norms. Given the crucial role of

media in shaping cultural values, understanding the extent of Western television's influence on Nigerian audiences is vital. This influence could have far-reaching implications, potentially affecting national development and cultural preservation. Therefore, this study aims to assess the cultural impact of Western cable channels on Nigerian viewers, particularly focusing on how these channels may be altering their perceptions and behaviours.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the extent of Nigerian cable television viewers' exposure to Western channels, particularly through platforms like DSTV, GOTV, and Star Times.
2. To analyse the cultural themes and content characteristics, such as gun violence, sexuality, and the portrayal of Nigerian and African contexts, present in Western channels broadcasted on Nigerian cable television.
3. To assess Nigerian viewers' perceptions and attitudes towards the cultural content and themes presented on Western channels.
4. To investigate potential behavioural changes or adaptations among Nigerian cable television viewers resulting from exposure to Western channels.
5. To evaluate the relevance and applicability of media cultivation theory in explaining the influence of Western channels on Nigerian cable television viewers.

Research Questions

1. What is the extent of Nigerian cable television viewers' exposure to Western channels, particularly through platforms like DSTV, GOTV, and Star Times?
2. What are the predominant cultural themes and content characteristics, such as gun violence, sexuality, and portrayals of Nigerian and African contexts, in Western channels broadcasted on Nigerian cable television?
3. How do Nigerian viewers perceive and interpret the cultural content and themes presented on Western channels?
4. What observable behavioural changes or adaptations, if any, can be attributed to Nigerian cable television viewers' exposure to Western channels?
5. To what extent does media cultivation theory explain the influence of Western channels on the cultural perceptions and behaviours of Nigerian cable television viewers?

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant implications for understanding the cultural dynamics and media influence on Nigerian society in the context of cable television. By exploring the influence of Western channels such as DSTV, GOTV, and Star Times on Nigerian viewers, the study contributes to:

1. **Cultural Understanding**: Providing insights into how Western media content, including themes such as gun violence, sexuality, and the portrayal of Nigerian and African contexts, influences cultural perceptions, values, and identity among Nigerian audiences.
2. **Media Impact**: Examining the effects of Western media on viewer attitudes, behaviours, and societal norms, particularly within Nigeria's diverse and culturally rich context.

3. **Policy and Regulation**: Informing media policymakers and regulators about the implications of Western media influence, guiding strategies for content regulation, cultural preservation, and enhancing local media content.
4. **Academic Discourse**: Contributing to the academic discourse on media cultivation theory and its applicability in non-Western contexts, thereby enriching media studies and cultural anthropology literature.
5. **Social Development**: Enhancing awareness of the socio-cultural impacts of media globalization, fostering discussions on cultural identity, national unity, and developmental priorities within Nigeria.

Overall, this study seeks to shed light on the complex interplay between media, culture, and society in Nigeria, offering valuable insights into the contemporary media landscape and its implications for cultural diversity and development.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework draws from media studies, cultural anthropology, and communication theories, offering a comprehensive understanding of the interaction between Western media and Nigerian society. Cultural Imperialism Theory suggests that economically powerful nations influence less dominant countries through media and cultural production, leading to the widespread adoption of their cultural values and norms. This theory provides a lens through which the impact of Western media on Nigerian society can be understood, particularly how it may contribute to shifts in cultural identity and values due to the media's inherent cultural biases.

Uses and Gratifications Theory offers further insight by examining why individuals seek out and engage with media. It explains that Nigerian viewers turn to Western media for specific purposes, such as entertainment, information, or social interaction. The theory helps to explore the gratifications they derive from consuming Western media content, and how this engagement shapes their perceptions and behaviours in relation to their cultural environment.

Reception Theory complements these perspectives by focusing on how audiences interpret media texts in light of their cultural backgrounds, social contexts, and personal experiences. It provides an understanding of how Nigerian viewers perceive and respond to Western media representations, particularly in terms of negotiating their cultural identities. This framework is essential in analysing how the portrayal of various cultural elements in Western media influences the way Nigerian audiences relate to their own culture and interpret the global media content they consume. The theoretical framework provides a structured approach to examining the cultural influence of Western channels on Nigerian cable television viewers, integrating relevant theories from media studies and cultural analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review for this study draws from three primary lenses: culture and its elements, television as a medium of cultural transmission, and the concepts of cultural imposition and imperialism.

Culture, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (2008), encompasses the distinctive ideas, customs, social behaviours, and ways of life shared by a nation, society, or people. It is dynamic and continuously evolving, characterized by elements such as norms, languages, rituals, dress, food, art, music, and architecture (Drew, 2023; Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). These cultural elements shape the identity and values of societies, influencing how individuals perceive and interact within their cultural contexts. Television plays a critical role as a medium for cultural transmission. Researchcage (2023) emphasizes its importance in broadcasting indigenous languages and cultural practices, thereby fostering national unity and cultural preservation. Yusuf (2015) highlights television's role in shaping perceptions of language and culture, especially in promoting indigenous languages. Appadurai (1996) extends this argument by suggesting that globalization should not be viewed solely as an economic process but as a cultural phenomenon with significant implications for identity, imagination, and social organization. His perspective challenges the traditional notion of cultural homogenization and underscores the complexities of cultural globalization. In a similar vein, Hannerz (1996) suggests that globalization fosters transnational connections, influencing cultures beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. His concept of the "global ecumene" describes a global cultural network where cultures interact and influence one another. He emphasizes the fluidity and dynamic nature of culture in this global context, challenging static views of cultural identity. Ginsburg (2016) adds to this discourse by discussing how the rise of global media conglomerates and advancements in communication technology have transformed cultural, political, and economic systems. He notes that while globalization has expanded access to information and cultural exchange, it has also raised concerns about cultural homogenization, particularly the dominance of Western media and its impact on local cultures. Miller (2002) focuses on television as a powerful cultural force that shapes public consciousness, social norms, and political ideologies. He advocates for a critical examination of television, not just as a source of entertainment, but as a tool for ideological dissemination. He explores how television content, production processes, and audience reception contribute to constructing social identities and reinforcing power structures. Morley (2000) furthers this exploration by examining how viewers actively interpret media messages and negotiate cultural meanings through media consumption.

The concept of cultural imposition and its historical context is also critical in this review. Hall (1990) discusses cultural identity within the African diaspora, emphasizing that identity is formed through shared histories and personal experiences. Africa, including Nigeria, has a long history of cultural contact and imposition, notably through the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and colonialism. Obi-Ani (2004) elaborates on how these historical events have shaped cultural dynamics in Nigeria, with the northern regions influenced by Arab-Islamic culture and the southern regions by European, particularly British and Portuguese, cultures. These interactions introduced both Christianity and Islam, significantly impacting Nigerian cultural practices and identities. Obi-Ani stresses the importance of preserving African cultural identity in the face of external pressures, advocating for the protection of indigenous knowledge systems and the transmission of African traditions to future generations. Mbembe (2001) critiques the simplistic narratives often used to describe African societies in Western discourse, offering a more

complex understanding of postcolonial power dynamics. He explores how domination persists in post-colonial societies, both symbolically and materially. In alignment with Obi-Ani and Mbembe, Adegbite (2019) warns that cultural globalization poses a threat to African cultural identities and practices, which are increasingly marginalized by global cultural flows dominated by the West. He emphasizes the need for cultural resilience and calls for strategies that enable African societies to adapt to globalization while preserving their core values. Echeruo (2001) echoes these concerns by critiquing the ongoing influence of colonial legacies on contemporary African societies. He argues for the decolonization of African culture and advocates for the reclamation and revitalization of indigenous practices. Ogunleye (2017) suggests a balanced approach to globalization, one that allows Nigeria to benefit from global media influences while also preserving and promoting its cultural heritage.

Finally, cultural imperialism is explored as a phenomenon where one nation imposes its cultural values on others through media dominance (Schiller, 1969). This concept is often associated with Western countries, which historically have used media to propagate their ideologies globally, influencing local cultures and identities. Giddens (1991) introduces the concept of "self-identity" as a reflexive process, where individuals constantly assess and reshape their identities in response to changing social conditions. He also discusses the role of trust and risk in modern society, suggesting that individuals must navigate uncertainties by making decisions about their own identities. Tomlinson (1991) critiques the idea of cultural imperialism by arguing that cultural exchange is more nuanced, involving resistance, adaptation, and hybridization. He asserts that cultural imperialism, while real, must be understood within the broader context of globalization, which involves both homogenization and diversification. McChesney (1999) raises concerns about the concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few large corporations, arguing that this undermines democracy by homogenizing content and marginalizing alternative voices. Boyd-Barrett (2005) examines how television content is now produced, distributed, and consumed across borders, creating a global circulation of television programs. He highlights the tension between global media influences and the preservation of local cultures and identities. Thussu (2007) challenges the notion of a unidirectional global media flow dominated by Western countries. He argues that media content also flows from the Global South to the Global North, facilitated by technological advancements and globalization. Thussu contends that this "contra-flow" diversifies global media content and provides alternative perspectives to Western-centric narratives.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to analyse the cultural influence of Western cable television channels on Nigerian audiences. This approach allowed for the examination of numerical data alongside nuanced insights into viewer perceptions and behavioural changes.

For the quantitative phase, a stratified random sampling technique was used to select a representative sample of 500 Nigerian cable television viewers. The sample was stratified by age, gender, education level, and geographic location to ensure broad demographic representation. In the qualitative phase, purposive sampling was utilized to select 30 participants with significant exposure to Western media channels, including DSTV, GOTV,

and Star Times. These participants were chosen based on their frequent engagement with Western media content.

Quantitative data was collected through a structured online survey administered to the 500 participants, with a response rate of 425 (85%). The survey aimed to measure exposure to Western channels, identify cultural themes, and assess viewers' perceptions and behaviours. For qualitative data, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with the 30 participants. The interviews, lasting approximately 60 minutes each, explored interpretations of Western media content, attitudes toward cultural themes, and behavioural adaptations. Focus groups consisted of 6 participants.

Statistical analysis was performed on the quantitative data using SPSS, with descriptive statistics providing an overview of exposure levels and content characteristics. Correlation and regression analyses were conducted to explore relationships between exposure to Western media and shifts in cultural perceptions and behaviours. Thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data from the interviews and focus group discussions, with NVivo software facilitating systematic coding and identification of recurring themes related to cultural perceptions and behavioural responses.

To ensure the validity of the data, methodological triangulation was employed by combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, thus enhancing the reliability of the findings. Survey instruments and interview questions were pilot-tested with a small subset of participants to ensure clarity and validity before the full-scale data collection began.

FINDINGS

The findings reveal a significant exposure of Nigerian audiences to Western media channels. Quantitative data showed that 402 (80.4%) of viewers access channels such as DSTV, GOTV, and Star Times, with DSTV being the most popular, 299 (59.8%). In the qualitative phase, interviews and focus groups indicated that viewers primarily engaged with Western channels for entertainment purposes - movies, sports, and reality shows, with minimal interest in news or educational programs from these sources.

The quantitative analysis identified recurring cultural themes in Western media, such as gun violence (316 = 63.2%), sexuality (275 = 55%), and affluence (335 = 67%). The majority of respondents (348 = 69.6%) expressed concerns about the often inaccurate or biased portrayal of Nigerian and African contexts. In the qualitative discussions, participants echoed these concerns, particularly criticizing the negative stereotyping of African cultures and the focus on sensationalist content, which they felt misrepresented their societies.

Regarding perceptions of cultural content, the quantitative survey revealed that 357 (71.4%) respondents believed Western media influenced their views on social norms and cultural values. Nevertheless, 367 (73.4%) expressed a preference for local content; emphasizing a desire for a greater representation of the Nigerian culture. Qualitative interviews supported this, with viewers acknowledging the entertainment value of Western media but expressing caution about its potential impact on their cultural identity. They maintained a strong connection to local traditions and viewed Western content as complementary rather than a replacement for Nigerian media.

Behavioural changes, particularly in fashion preferences and language use, were moderately correlated with Western media exposure, as indicated by a correlation coefficient of 0.40. This impact was more pronounced among younger viewers. However, qualitative data suggested that these behavioural adaptations were mostly superficial, with traditional cultural practices, family structures, and religious values remaining resilient and largely unaffected by Western influences.

Finally, the relevance of media cultivation theory was supported by the quantitative data; which indicated that prolonged exposure to Western media correlated with altered perceptions of social status and lifestyle aspirations. However, qualitative findings highlighted that viewers actively resisted and selectively interpreted Western media messages, suggesting that the theory needed to account for this active audience engagement.

CONCLUSION

The research concludes that Western cable television channels have a significant presence among Nigerian viewers, mainly for entertainment. Despite this, their influence on cultural norms and values is moderated by the strong attachment Nigerians have to their local culture and a clear preference for Indigenous content. Western media often presents Nigerian and African contexts through biased or exaggerated portrayals, which can affect viewer perceptions. However, this is counterbalanced by the preference for local cultural expressions and a critical stance towards Western stereotypes. Although some behavioural changes, particularly in areas such as fashion, can be linked to exposure to Western media, these are generally superficial. Core cultural practices and values remain largely unaffected. Media cultivation theory helps explain the influence of Western media on perceptions of wealth and social status; though requires modification to account for the complexities of audience resistance and selective engagement with media content.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on these findings, various recommendations have been put forward. Encouraging the production and dissemination of more local media content that reflects Nigerian culture and values is essential. This includes investing in the local film and television industries to promote content that captures the diverse Nigerian experience. Policies should be developed to ensure balanced representation in media, reducing the prevalence of negative stereotypes and promoting more accurate portrayals of Nigerian and African contexts. Media literacy programs are also important, helping viewers critically engage with both local and foreign content and fostering more informed media consumption. To support cultural resilience, initiatives that preserve and celebrate Nigerian cultural heritage should be encouraged; including promoting traditional practices, languages, and customs; alongside the consumption of global media. Finally, further research is recommended, particularly longitudinal studies, to explore the long-term effects of media exposure on cultural identity and behaviour. This will provide deeper insights into how media influences evolve over time and offer strategies to balance global and local media effects.

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