

## **Igbo Indigenous Culture at the Mercy of Western Culture Dominance: what can the Mass Media do?**

### **ABSTRACT**

The goal of this study was to examine the role of the mass media in the sustenance of Igbo indigenous culture. The study's theoretical underpinning was the Agenda Setting Theory. In this study, the survey research design was used. The population consists of 555,500 residents of Owerri metropolis. The sample size of 384 was determined using the Wimmer and Dominick sample size calculator, and the multistage sampling procedure was used as the sampling method. To collect the data, a questionnaire was used as the instrument. Findings revealed that at a mean score of 3.0 (N = 360), the mass media promote foreign culture more than Igbo indigenous culture. It was also revealed that, on average, 62% of mass media have not been effective in sustaining the Igbo indigenous culture. We therefore conclude that the mass media promote the Igbo indigenous culture to a moderate extent. However, they pay more attention to promoting foreign cultures than the Igbo indigenous culture. Because of the lack of commitment they put in, they have become ineffective in sustaining the Igbo indigenous culture. We recommend that the mass media put more effort into promoting the Igbo indigenous culture by ensuring that their contents promote indigenous culture rather than western culture; also, more space or time should be allocated to indigenous culture contents, while the western cultural content to be disseminated by the media should be censored and limited.

**Keywords:** Igbo, mass media, foreign culture, indigenous culture, sustaining

### **Introduction**

There is no doubt that one of the ways culture can be preserved is through communication. According to Dakroury (2014), culture and communication are inextricably linked; levels of awareness of diverse cultures influence media contents, while media platforms and contents influence cultural and daily activities. The media and cultural standards are intricately intertwined. Beliefs, values, and social conventions are key components of culture and serve to bind cultures together. The media teaches its audience about cultural values and customs. This is an example of a socialisation process that aids in strengthening national and international bonds. The world is given meaning through culture, which is socially built and upheld through communication (Baran, 2012). Thus, the mass media play a role in the development and preservation of culture. The mass media are interaction fronts for global cultural integration as well as cultural storytellers. Undoubtedly, the mass media now play a crucial role in the development and dissemination of cultures around the world. Showkat (2017) concurs that the media is crucial in spreading the cultural norms that govern our daily lives. It is claimed to represent our cultural norms and beliefs and that the global flow of information has increased cultural expression by giving us more options. When media content creators have vested interests in specific social aims, cultural values also influence the messages that are broadcast through mass media. It might be argued that there is a close connection between popular culture and mainstream media. The many media outlets and the local culture are connected. It might be further argued that, according to the literature, "media narratives and discourses are formed inside varied kinds of texts and pictures that are complexly tied to the cultural perceptions and practises of both those who make and consume

them." The connection between the complete portrayal of a people's way of life and the meaning they inspire in each of us is the basis of all modern communication. It is common knowledge that meaning is governed by agreed-upon convention. Therefore, we are able to communicate with one another either directly or indirectly.

Nwammuo (2011), however, argues that one of the issues facing the world's emerging nations is the loss of treasured ideals as a result of the popularisation of western cultures and values at the expense of authentic African norms and values. According to Chiakaan and Ahmad (2011), the pollution is a result of television programmes and images in newspapers, magazines, and the internet. This pollution affects all manifestations of Nigerian and African cultures. According to Allimi (2005), when you take a broad view of the communication channels present in Nigeria today, it appears that foreign values, alien beliefs, and alien psychology have been successfully imposed on our society. Why is this the case? We are giving foreign "non-creative works" space and airtime on radio, television, and in the press, both privately and publicly held, which is a waste of a precious communication resource. Furthermore, Nigerians' indigenous cultures, such as the Igbo culture, which includes traditional marriage, attire, cultural festivals, and language, have been marginalised and undeveloped as a result of the country's excessive promotion of foreign culture. At the cost of Igbo culture, imitation of Western culture has become the norm. Instead of supporting and growing our native arts, crafts, technologies, and businesses, our media instead denigrates them as "primitive," "outmoded," "local," "native," "traditional," "fetish," and other such things while emulating Western culture.

### **Statement of the Problem**

People acquire new ideas, new ways of acting, and new and developing trends through the media, and as a result, people in a community pass on their cultural legacy and way of life from generation to generation. The mass media is a real tool for culture education and sustenance, as well as for assisting individuals in understanding and preserving their identity. Every nation's culture is an essential component of that nation and should be preserved, especially via the media, which informs the public of the events taking place around them. The general public relies on the media to inform them of indigenous culture and traditions, which they then adopt and spread to others. Is the mass media fulfilling its role of preserving the Igbo indigenous culture in light of the extent of cultural erosion and neglect, particularly with regard to that culture? Has the media been successful in promoting awareness of the Igbo indigenous culture?

### **Objective of the Study**

The specific objectives are to:

1. Find out to what extent the mass media make efforts to promote the Igbo indigenous culture among Owerri metropolis residents.
2. Ascertain whether the mass media promote foreign culture more than Igbo indigenous culture.
3. Examine how effective the mass media have been in sustaining the Igbo indigenous culture.

### **Literature Review**

## **A Peep at Culture**

The identity of man is his culture. No matter where they are, people can always be recognised by their culture, and nobody can truly claim to be culture-free. Every person is born into an existing culture, which must be learned and influences how one lives, according to Anyanwu and Etumnu (2018). "Culture is the aggregate of the learned behaviours of a group of people that are often thought to constitute that people's tradition and are handed down from generation to generation," according to Sitaram (1970), referenced in Ademola and Okunola (2013, pp. 1–2). According to Cole (2019), the term "culture" refers to a broad and diversified range of largely intangible components of social life, such as shared values, beliefs, linguistic and communicational systems, and behaviours that can be used to describe a group of people collectively. It is essential to human survival and civilisation, encapsulating a people's entire response to the difficulties of living in a (any) living environment in its vibrancy. The socio-economic, political, and artistic ethos of a society are given meaning, purpose, and value through culture. The tangible possessions shared by that group or community are likewise considered to be part of its culture. The social structure and economic aspects of society are distinct from culture, but they are intertwined in that they constantly inform and are informed by it. In the same way that Zimmermann (2017) defines culture as the traits and knowledge of a particular group of people, including language, religion, cuisine, social customs, music, and the arts, it also includes religion, food, what we wear and how we wear it, our language, marriage, music, what we believe is right or wrong, how we sit at the table, how we greet guests, how we interact with family members, and a myriad of other things. People are extremely devoted to their cultures since they have always been products of them.

## **Mass Media and Culture**

The multitude of channels via which mass communication occurs are referred to as the mass media. The term "mass media" refers to media that is produced, distributed, and consumed by very large audiences (Hassan, 2013). Electronic, print, and, more recently, digital media make up the three main types of mass media. Whether it be print or electronic, every medium has its own quirks. Radio, television, newspapers, magazines, and most recently the internet/digital media are all examples of technologically mediated, institutionally organised, and spontaneously expressed means of social communication in rural and urban settings. Professional communicators employ media tools to broadcast messages widely, quickly, and selectively while paying attention to audiences in an effort to influence them in a number of ways. This technique is known as "mass media" (Asemah, 2011).

Communication and culture are intertwined and interdependent. Beliefs, values, and social conventions are key components of culture and serve to bind cultures together. The media teaches its audience about cultural values and customs. This is one socialisation process that aids in the unification of a nation and a community of nations. The world is given meaning through culture, which is socially built and upheld through communication. Thus, mass media have a role in the development and preservation of culture (Thompson, 2017). The mass media serve as a corpus of interconnected fronts for the blending of world cultures in addition to being cultural storytellers (Baran, 2012). Undoubtedly, the mass media now play a crucial role in the development and dissemination of cultures around the world. People gain social adaptation skills as a result of media exposure to the conventions and values of various cultures. As a result, the media's function in cultural transmission serves as a potent educational instrument for disseminating cultural information to a broad audience. Through this media function, those who are curious about various cultures, especially immigrants who move to foreign countries, can become acquainted with the new culture.

As cultures are conveyed through the media, all components of a culture, including a people's history, religion, symbols, values, social structures, and languages, are transmitted to every corner of the globe (Haralambos & Holborn, 2013).

The media play a variety of functions in the effort to preserve and nurture culture in society. These include, according to (Iheanacho, 2014):

Cultural Purveyance, where the media is regarded as a major carrier of culture, the media promote and transmit cultural values toward social integration; Bridging the Cultural Gap between the Archetypal and Contemporary Culture where 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, which so doing, they make it possible for people to learn more about other people and different cultures.

These cultures would change if indigenous cultures were developed and promoted in place of the mass media's current attrition and westernisation gestures. The media's orientation needs to alter first. All Nigerians, including our leaders in the government, military, politics, media, business, professions, traditional leaders, and the populace, must uphold at least a minimal standard of honesty and decency. According to Allimi (2012), cultural journalists must be at the forefront of promoting to youngsters our positive cultural values and societal norms, particularly through engaging forms of art, music, dance, theatre, and sports. Let's demonstrate the value of hard work and integrity using the entirety of our art and culture. We cannot ignore the family structure, which is the most powerful tool for public education and the foundation of any society. You play the role of a social mobilizer, promoting societal values and standards while supporting the cause of growth. The media must educate Nigerians in general, as well as our civic and military leaders, about this cultural value. The mass media are also seen to have a role in inspiring and mobilising people to achieve their political, social, and economic goals as individuals and as a group within society. This is done while taking into account some essential components for sustained national development. In order to ensure that progress is realised and perpetuated, Chikaan (2013) contends that the mass media—both print and electronic—must continue to perform their role as institutions, socialisation agents, and integral parts of Nigerian society. The structural-functionalists hold this perspective and emphasise the impact or influence of the media on society by referring to "structure" as "part of a whole" and "function" as "effect." The media should continually and significantly contribute to the process of educating the public about our culture and disseminating knowledge about it. The media should establish cultural priorities while acting as an agent of mobilisation because these priorities translate into a sense of public engagement and, ultimately, a good democratic culture. In their news and programmes, they ought to uphold a strong sense of impartiality, ethics, truth, and respect for our culture(s). They need to be careful about the information they take in from foreign media and pass along to us. Isa (2005) asserts that no matter how much a culture evolves, there are some elements or characteristics that always stay crucial. It is the responsibility of the media to recognise these characteristics of culture and to emphasise them to the public in order to uphold, preserve, and sustain them. The media should persuade the government to establish organisations that would guarantee the advancement of our culture.

### **2.3 Domineering nature of Foreign Culture**

Africans tend to believe that their culture is inferior to that of the Western world because of the mentality that colonial masters ingrained in them. Because of western society, several of

our native cultures have been abandoned. This is why Robert, Besong, and Dibie (2015) stated that it is quite unfortunate and regrettable that our esteemed norms, values, and cultures of Africa are still being eroded by Africans themselves as well as the colonialists and neo-colonists. This is true despite the high intellectual prowess and talents of Africans. They continued by claiming that Africans were still being misled into believing that western civilization was superior today.

The media imperialism hypothesis holds that Western nations dominate the world's media. Third World cultures, which are benefactors of Western ideas, are heavily influenced by such supremacy, which obliterates and replaces national civilizations. Even while we understand how crucial the media is for promoting intercultural dialogue, there are issues with cultural imperialism (White, 2001). As global media exporters push their cultural standards on their audiences around the world, the trend leads to reliance, loss of independence, and a diminution in national or local cultures as well as what appears to be a growth in what appears to be a global culture (Ekeanyanwu, 2015). This is partially due to the fact that an unbalanced flow of mass media content endangers cultural sovereignty and hinders cultural growth, which on the one hand leads to cultural imperialism and on the other to cultural poverty. This is predicated on the notion that the majority of media (movies, news, comics, etc.) are produced by Western cultures because they have the resources to do so (Konkwo, 2004).

According to Nwauzor (2014), a society's ideological foundations are impacted by shifting ideals. In addition to the long-lasting consequences of colonialism, the shifting values, customs, and culture of Nigerian society have a significant impact on it and are largely responsible for its underdevelopment and national problems. Therefore, because Western culture dominates the system, it not only subordinates but also threatens Nigerian cultural values. It makes use of the media to spread its culture, which today's youth regard as the best way of life and something that merits adaptation (Robert & Dibie, 2015). As a result, there has been significant cultural reliance. Because of the influence the western world has because of its media system, they control what takes place. Robert and Dibie (2015) observed that Nigerian indigenous socio-cultural norms, values, and traditions have little to no place in the modern, globalised society after being Westernized by Western imitators and Western master rhetoricians. They had a persistent desire to adopt Western culture.

#### **2.4 Empirical Review**

In a study, Nwaolikpe (2013) revealed that using the mass media to communicate Nigerian culture to the public results in both cultural transformation and preservation. However, most people lack a sense of connection to their cultural heritage since they don't understand or care about their origins. However, reading the stories provided in print media may help people understand and value their roots. According to a study by Iheanacho (2014), the media has a significant role in spreading awareness of cultural norms and values and projecting them for admiration and borrowing. The media is more than just a tool; it has its own identity and has the power to change the very nature of human civilizations and cultures. Additionally, it was discovered that behind the plausible functions of cultural reporting and teaching that the media execute, there exist dysfunctional trajectories. As a result, media outlets contribute to the erosion of cultural and societal identity values.

According to Simon and Ndoma (2016), the changing of indigenous cultures in Nigerian media is now nothing to write home about. They have resorted to downplaying and marginalising indigenous culture in favour of promoting, expanding, and emphasising the entirety of western society. Ademola and Okunola (2013) looked at cultural dominance as a result of the relationship between both total efficiencies, in the sense that the dominating culture pours a flood of cultural materials onto the dominated culture. Three theories—the

limited influence hypothesis, the class dominating theory, and the culturalist theory—were used to study mass media. One of the most important institutions and a potent tool for socialisation and cultural dominance has been discovered to be the mass media. According to Hassen (2016), the study's findings indicated that Western cultures are regarded as modern, while indigenous cultures are thought to be backward. Global discourse makes it simpler for Western civilization to erase native and regional cultures, which are priceless to Ethiopia's varied populations. In this context, the media is crucial. The Ethiopian people had long been protecting local cultural values, but they were under pressure from modern technology-mediated global discourses that dominated the global information sphere. Anyanwu and Etumnu (2018) investigated mass media and the Igbo language culture, and it was reported that respondents in the Owerri metropolis are moderately exposed to Igbo language content on the mass media, and as such, 58% of the respondents speak Igbo language moderately as a result of their exposure to mass media content.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical underpinning of this study is the Agenda Setting Theory. McCombs and Shaw put forth the theory in 1972–1973. The theory's central tenet is that the media set the agenda for public discourse (Nwamara & Etumnu, 2022). According to the notion, most of the images we store in our minds, most of the concerns or thoughts we have, and most of the topics we talk about are influenced by what we have read, heard, or seen in various forms of mass media (Alphonsus et al., 2022). The mass media influence how we view specific cultural issues and how we perceive that some issues are more pressing than others in our society (Asemah et al., 2017). With the intention of reducing it, significant issues like cultural neglect and subordination as a result of western cultural domination are put on the table for public dialogue. This theory is most applicable to the study because the media presents cultural norms and values that the public thinks are significant. Additionally, the media has the power to alter the perceptions of each audience member's social reality by deciding which cultural norms will be the subject of public discourse.

### **Method**

The survey research design was adopted for this study. The survey approach is the ideal research design for this study because it allows respondents' opinions to be sampled regarding the issue under investigation (Tayo-Garbson et al., 2019). The population of Owerri Metropolis in 2017 was 555,500, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. The Wimmer and Dominick online sample size calculator was used to determine the 384 sample size. A questionnaire was used to collect data for the study, and it was distributed using the multistage sampling technique to the people of Owerri Metropolis in Imo State. Owerri, which is a cluster, has already been separated into three areas, namely Owerri North, Owerri West, and Owerri Municipal, in the first stage. Two communities were purposefully chosen from each local government area for the second stage because they had a high literacy rate and a high access percentage to mass media. Orji, Uratta, Umuguma, Ihiagwa, Umuoyima, and Umuororonjo are the selected areas, accordingly. In step three, the researchers chose six communities and delivered the questionnaire to them in an asymmetrical manner ( $384/6 = 64$ ). Using a purposeful decision, the researcher distributed 64 copies of the questionnaire to respondents in these communities. To analyse the data, simple percentage and mean calculations were employed.

### **Results**

Three hundred eighty-four (384) respondents in Owerri were given the questionnaire, which is the study's instrument for gathering data. While a return rate of 369 (96%) was obtained, 15 (4%) questionnaire copies were not returned. As a result, the 369 questionnaires that were returned served as the basis for the data presentation.

Table 1: Respondents response on mass media dedicate most of their content in promoting the Igbo indigenous culture

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	148	40%
No	221	60%
Can't say	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

Created by authors, sources (Field Survey, 2022)

According to the data in Table 1 above, 60% of the respondents agreed that the Igbo indigenous culture is not primarily promoted by mass media. It suggests that the majority of those surveyed believe that mainstream media outlets do not devote the majority of their material to promoting the indigenous Igbo culture.

Table 2: Respondents response on the extent the mass media make efforts to promote the Igbo indigenous culture among Owerri metropolis residents

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Very high	36	10%
High	79	21%
Moderate	187	51%
Low	67	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

Created by authors, sources (Field Survey, 2022)

For the table 2 analysis, it was revealed that 51% of the respondents confirmed that to a moderate extent, the mass media make efforts to promote the Igbo indigenous culture among Owerri metropolis residents. This means that many of the respondents studied indicated that mass media make efforts to promote the Igbo indigenous culture among Owerri metropolis residents to a moderate extent.

Table 3: Respondents response on whether the mass media promote foreign culture more than Igbo indigenous culture

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Decision
Strongly agree	120	32%		
Agree	155	42%		
Disagree	73	20%		
Strongly disagree	21	6%		
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

Created by authors, sources (Field Survey, 2022)

At a mean score of 3.0 (N = 360), it was revealed that the mass media promote foreign culture more than Igbo indigenous culture. What this means is that respondents agreed that mass media promote foreign culture as opposed to Igbo indigenous culture.

Table 4: Respondents responses on the mass media are concerned in sustaining the Igbo indigenous culture despite pressure from western culture

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Decision
Strongly agree	52	14%		
Agree	38	10%		
Disagree	147	40%		
Strongly disagree	132	36%		
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>rejected</b>

Created by authors, sources (Field Survey, 2022)

At a mean score of 2.0 (N = 360), respondents rejected that mass media are concerned with sustaining the Igbo indigenous culture despite pressure from western culture. It implies that respondents are of the view that the mass media are not so concerned with sustaining the Igbo indigenous culture despite pressure from western culture.

Table 5: Respondents response on the mass media have been effective in sustaining the Igbo indigenous culture

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Very effective	23	6%
Effective	55	15%
Moderate	95	26%
Not effective	177	48%
Can't say	19	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

Created by authors, sources (Field Survey, 2022)

According to the data in the above table, 48% of the respondents revealed that the mass media are not effective in their role of sustaining Igbo indigenous culture. This implies that the majority of the respondents are of the view that the mass media have not been effective in sustaining the Igbo indigenous culture.

## Discussion

Results showed that at an average of 56%, mass media make efforts to promote the Igbo indigenous culture among Owerri metropolis residents to a moderate extent. This finding is consistent with the study of Anyanwu and Etumnu (2018), who revealed that to a moderate extent, respondents speak Igbo as a result of their exposure to mass media content. In spite of the media's apparent role in cultural reporting and education, Iheanacho (2014) found that there are dysfunctional trajectories underlying the processes. As a result, the media contributes to the erosion of cultural and societal identity values. The obvious fact is that with the lack of commitment of the mass media to promoting the Igbo indigenous culture, the issue of cultural neglect will continue to persist. The discovery implies that the mass media are still paying lip service to the campaign to promote indigenous Igbo culture; if this were not the case, they would have made significant efforts to promote indigenous Igbo culture. This is where agenda setting comes in; by the time they set the agenda on the importance of culture, people will have no option but to think in that direction, and by so doing, the relevance of the Igbo indigenous culture will become popular and may not be at risk of extinction.

Findings revealed that at a mean score of 3.0 (N = 360), the mass media promote foreign culture more than Igbo indigenous culture. This finding is in consonance with Hassen (2016), who revealed that indigenous cultures are associated with backwardness and Western cultures are considered modern, and that local cultural values have been under intense pressure as a result of modern technology that mediated global discourses that dominated the global information space. Such global discourse facilitates the Western culture's erasure of

indigenous and local cultures. Similarly, the study of Ademola and Okunola (2013) revealed that foreign culture exerts some dominance on the local culture and that the media, which is an agent of socialisation is also a significant tool for cultural domination. Further, Robert and Dibia (2015) discovered that Nigerian indigenous sociocultural norms and values, as well as cultures, have little to no place in today's globalised society because they have been Westernized and are perpetually yearning to be Westernized by Western imitators and Western master rhetoricians. The implication of the finding is that the media pay more attention to promoting foreign culture than Igbo indigenous culture. The media can rewrite this narrative with their agenda-setting function and make the Igbo indigenous culture look superior instead of inferior.

Findings revealed that, on average, 62% of mass media have not been effective in sustaining the Igbo indigenous culture. This finding is in agreement with that of Nwaolikpe (2013), who revealed in a study that the culture of Nigerians can be communicated to the citizens by employing the mass media, which brings about cultural change and preservation. However, most times people are not connected to their cultural heritage because they may know nothing or feel nothing about where they come from because the media are not doing enough to make them aware, even though they have the capacity to become aware of and appreciate their roots. The study by Simon and Ndoma (2016) also showed that the Nigerian media's progress in transforming indigenous cultures is not particularly noteworthy at the moment. They have resorted to marginalising and dismissing indigenous culture while pushing, expanding, and emphasising the entirety of western culture. Also in tandem is the finding of Anyanwu and Etumnu (2018), who revealed that the mass media have been ineffective in promoting the Igbo language among residents of Owerri. The implication of this finding is that the mass media have not been doing enough in their effort to sustain the Igbo indigenous culture, and this may not be unconnected to their commitment to promoting the Igbo indigenous culture.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the findings, we therefore conclude that the mass media promote the Igbo indigenous culture to a moderate extent. However, they pay more attention to promoting foreign cultures than the Igbo indigenous culture. Because of the lack of commitment they put in, they have become ineffective in sustaining the Igbo indigenous culture. That is to say, they have not played their role in the sustenance of the Igbo indigenous culture effectively.

We thereby recommend that the mass media should put more effort into promoting the Igbo indigenous culture by ensuring that their contents promote indigenous culture rather than western culture; also, more space or time should be allocated to indigenous culture contents, while the western cultural content to be disseminated by the media should be censored and limited. Governments and other private organisations should sponsor cultural programmes through the media, as the media is a veritable tool for social change. Finally, the media should accept the responsibility of preserving Igbo indigenous culture in order to eliminate the possibility of cultural extinction.

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