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Global Digital Technologies and the Homogenization of Culture in Africa

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Introduction- Concerns about the possible effe cts of the mass media on individuals and cultures have been a preoccupation of academic research since World War 11. The Electronic colonialism Theory posits that mass media when exported carry with them broad range of values. These values are economic, social, cultural and sometimes political or religious in nature. Increasingly, they carry with them the English language in terms of music, movies, or the Internet. The World Systems theory elaborates and extends the Electronic Colonialism Theory (ECT) further by dividing the nations of the globe into three categories; it then expands on how the core category works to influence the two subordinate categories. However, within the Core nations, some are concerned about the impact and penetration of ECT as well, countries such as Canada, France, the U.K, Israel, New Zealand and Australia are prime Core nations that continually worry about the Americanization of their domestic cultural industries and consumer behavior (McPhail: 2010: 35).

Keywords: global digital technology; social media, globalization; homogenization, culture.

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Global Digital Technologies and the Homogenization of Culture in Africa

Usman Jimada

I. Introduction

Concerns about the possible effects of the mass media on individuals and cultures have been a preoccupation of academic research since World War 11. The Electronic colonialism Theory posits that mass media when exported carry with them broad range of values. These values are economic, social, cultural and sometimes political or religious in nature. Increasingly, they carry with them the English language in terms of music, movies, or the Internet. The World Systems theory elaborates and extends the Electronic Colonialism Theory (ECT) further by dividing the nations of the globe into three categories; it then expands on how the core category works to influence the two subordinate categories. However, within the Core nations, some are concerned about the impact and penetration of ECT as well, countries such as Canada, France, the U.K, Israel, New Zealand and Australia are prime Core nations that continually worry about the Americanization of their domestic cultural industries and consumer behavior(McPhail: 2010:35)

As media companies explore the market for their products, there are concerns that cultures will become increasingly homogenized and local cultural values will be lost. Most vulnerable to such influences of global media are members of ethnic or language groups. (Hollifield: 2004:101) African countries are no exception in this global process as TV satellite and digital technologies erode cultural values. The consequences of this, is the rise of a globalized media culture which incorporates the values of western capitalism, individualism and consumerism. (Tomlinson, 1999) The concerns with these globalized values are based principally on the assumptions that the maintenance of cultural identities among African countries is a means of containing the influence of cultural globalization and of supporting economic and social policies that are more relevant to the needs of African countries.

Merkovity has observed that Social Networking Sites (SNS) have come to occupy a central place in the everyday socializing of millions of users around the world and the homogenizing effect of social media is both capital as well as social. (Merkovity, N, et. al. 2013).

Africa is emerging as a market for global digital capitalism and potential for its integration into the Globalised Culture through the process of homogenization. With greater penetration of the internet and more of its citizens being connected through the mobile phone to the social media platforms. It is the fastest growing even though the digital divide persists. This study examines the existing theories of globalization and Critical cultural studies to explore the processes by which African societies are brought into the capitalist, consumerists' norms and values. How are African cultures transformed as a result of this global impact especially in the area of fast food? Is there a uniform outcome of the transformed local African culture or a hybrid culture as a result of the impact of the dominant western culture through digital technology?

Keywords: global digital technology; social media, globalization; homogenization, culture.

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II. Conceptual Framework

Globalization is entering a new era, defined not only by cross-border flows of goods and capital, but also, and increasingly, by flows of data and information. This shift would seem to favor the advanced economies, whose industries are at the frontier in employing digital technologies in their products and operations. (Digital Globalization and the Developing World).

What are Global Digital Technologies?

Digital technologies are electronic tools, systems, devices and resources that generate, store or process data. Examples include social media, online games, multimedia and mobile phones. Digital technologies have risen to prominence as a critical determinant of economic growth, and international competiveness. They ensure social connectivity, communication speed, automation, information storage. Digital technologies have been in the fore front of digital marketing providing many with services that include websites, content and videography. Through digital marketing competitors increase their sales and profits, traffic and brand awareness. According to the UN, Digital technologies have advanced more rapidly than any innovation in our history and have reached 50 per cent of the developing world's population in only two decades and transforming societies. The social media connects almost half of the entire global population.

Although McQuail (2010), suggests that television is still the single most potent influence in accelerating media globalization process, partly

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because as with the cinema film, its characteristics helps it to pass barriers of language. In its early days its range of terrestrial transmission was limited to national frontiers in most countries. However, the advent of cable satellite and other means of transmission ensured that it was able to break the boundaries of the national sovereignty of broadcasting space in the 1970s. Today another new force of internalization is the Internet which does not observe the national boundaries even if language, culture and social relations do ensure that frontiers still structure the flow of content. (McQuail 2010).

The process of social media connection is facilitated through the technology of the Internet.

The internet is a seamless web of digital information flows that are instant, inexpensive, and weightless. It respects no boundaries, political or social, while furthering the norms of western liberal democracy, especially the norms of market economy as embodied in the corporate champions of the Silicon Valley such as Google and Apple. (Jack Linchuan Qui: 20) These are private firms enjoying abundant investment from and reporting to the Wall Street. Hence, we are told, the internet as a global project is the favourite child of neoliberal capitalism (McChesney 2013), and by extension, of the American Empire (Fuchs 2016b).

The internet has become the most global media system in human history. As of December 2019, there are 4.16 billion internet users around the globe, comprising 54.4 per cent of the world's 7.63 billion total population (https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm). Fully 74 per cent of the internet's user population resides in the Global South, including Asia (48.7 per cent), Africa (10.9 per cent), Latin America (10.5 per cent) and the Middle East (3.9 per cent).

Only 26 per cent of the world's internet users live in the Global North: Europe (17 per cent), North America (8.3 per cent) and Oceania (0.7 per cent). In terms of total user population, the internet has further de-westernized since 2010 when Northern countries had 40 per cent of all users globally (ITU 2010). By 2017 their share has decreased to slightly more than 25 per cent. This is certainly a notable development for the Global South, which has become home to most of the world's internet users. But still, 45.6 per cent of humanity is not connected, and the great majority of non-users reside in the 'archipelago of disconnection' such as Sub-Saharan Africa (Straumann and Graham 2016). Even bearing this in mind, we can still consider the internet the most global media system compared to its predecessors.

Not only is the internet more global due to its capacity to link up and encompass other media, it also includes many more functioning and dysfunctional terminals – computers, mobile phones, a wide variety of smart devices – that are visible in the small towns of the Global South as well. One key reason for this is mobility – and not only that related to hand-held mobile devices, but also of the internet itself. As Jonathan Donner reflects on his research in Africa and Asia: 'It is only through mobile technologies that the internet has become pervasive, everyday, and inexpensive enough to be truly global and, thus, it is only through mobile technologies that many people have been able to use the internet for anything at all' (Donner 2015: 178).

The key issue here is how the internet due to its scale, structure and light regulation amplifies neo liberalism's tendency towards corporate power, market concentration and increased inequality.

As Fusch suggests, this tendency towards market concentration is further amplified by algorithms, infrastructure, data and network effects: (Fusch 2012:74).

The internet has tended to intensify many of the effects of neoliberalism. These include greater market concentration and increased inequality. Market logics are also capturing more and more of social life through data which is then used for behaviour modification. (Fusch 2012: 77)

As observed by Robert McChesney, "the hallmark of the global media system is the relentless, ubiquitous commercialism"? Shopping channels," informercials" mailed product placement is booming in the global media systems." He adds, that " it should come as no surprise that account after account in the late 1990s document the fascination even the obsession of the world's middle class youth with consumer brands and products The digital media has assumed immense importance such that the Gen Y seems to be the most digitally connected (McChesney 2004). Across the world, there are approximately 1.5 billion conversations an hour going on in social media platforms. According to an analysis social media users share 30 billion pieces of content- comments, opinions, information videos, podcasts and photographs- each month, making it officially and unequivocally one of the mainstream media.

Communication technology since the end of the Second World War was conceived and still is, developed and saturated with the interest and specifications of monopoly capitalism. Western technology is developed as an integral part of capitalist exploitative system of production which extends and deepens that exploitation (Schiller 1976:55).

III. How Global Digital Technologies are Facilitating Cultural Homogenization Process

Undoubtedly, the digital revolution that occurred at the end of the 20th century has led to the emergence of digital technologies that have become creative and efficient in devising the means to variously tap the markets and financial resources that were historically the basis of the news industry. For instance, companies

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such as Google, Yahoo!, Craigslist and eBay developed online advertising and auction services that were highly targeted and efficient.

With the rise of social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter, saw advertisers being attracted to the roughly one billion individuals who subscribe to their services and daily interact by using these services and in the process actively click on advertisements placed on them. (Pavlik, 2013)

Digital companies have seen their advertising revenues grow astronomically. For instance, by 2010, Google's advertising revenues had reached $8.44 billion (Google 2011).Yahoo!'s ad revenues topped $1.9 billion in 2010 (Shields 2011), and Facebook exceeded $1.86 billion for 2010 (O'Dell 2011). The total for these big three new media online companies reached more than $12.2 billion in annual ad revenues for 2010.

As in the nature of digital technology and media economy, advertising is a huge source of income. Facebook is a large advertising machine (Fuchs, 2012).

Personal private data on Facebook are commodified and sold to advertisers. These personal private-public data generated by users who post photos; write, share, and like posts; comment; create communities of friends; and browse friends' pages create a user commodity that is sold to advertisers for targeted advertising. Unlike the audience commodity critique of media industry (Smythe, 1977), digital technology users are both producers and consumers-prosumers (Tofler, 1980)-whose user-generated content is commodified. Fuchs (2012) notes that Facebook sells its prosumers as a commodity to advertisers on the rationale that their exchange value is based on produced use values derived from personal data and interactions.

But rather than seeing audiences as working for (social) media to create a commodity for advertising, scholars have argued that it is critically more useful to see them as raw materials coded in statistical representations and shaped into commodities by marketers and sold (Bolin, 2010; Jin & Feenberg, 2015).

In addition to content and user commodification, Facebook's dominance of the social networking domain and capital accumulation strategy is one in which it enjoys a monopoly. For example, Facebook controls three social networking platforms which dominate the top four social network sites worldwide: Facebook, WhatsApp, and Facebook Messenger (Statista, 2019). Baird (2016) observes that one in seven minutes spent online is on Facebook. In many parts of Africa, where voice telephony on a mobile network is costly, many have resorted to texting, especially among the youth.

Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp (both owned by Facebook) have become the dominant alternatives to the pricey short message service provided by cell phone operators. This monopolistic tendency is a direct result of the culture of mergers and acquisitions that shapes the political economy of the digital revolution. (Toks Dele Oyedemi (2019).

To further explore the market for Facebook in its drive for more advertising revenue, Mark Zuckerberg has added Hausa language as an official language of Facebook. Hausa joins the African class of Somali, Swahili, Afrikaans and Kinyarwanda. There are well over 80 million Hausa language speakers in Nigeria, Niger Republic, Ghana, Cameroon, Chad, Sudan as well as the Ivory Coast with significant indigenized populations in Benin, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, Togo, Eritrea, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Senegal and the Gambia Mark Zuckerberg said he was proud to add Hausa to the language options of Facebook. This latest addition to the digital technology users majority of them made up of a vibrant youth population will be targeted and sold to advertisers. They will be brought under the ambit of the new global culture.

Internet Users Statistics for Africa

(Africa Internet Usage, 2020 Population Stats and Facebook Subscribers)

AFRICA 2020 POPULATION AND INTERNET USERS STATISTICS						
AFRICA	Population (2020 Est.)	Internet Users 31-Dec-2000	Internet Users 31-DEC-2019	Penetration (% Population)	Internet Growth % 2000 - 2020	Facebook subscribers 31-DEC-2019
Algeria	43,851,044	50,000	25,428,159	58.0 %	50,756 %	19,000,000
Angola	32,866,272	30,000	7,078,067	21.5 %	23,493 %	2,244,000
Benin	12,123,200	15,000	3,801,758	31.4 %	25,245 %	920,000
Botswana	2,351,627	15,000	1,116,079	47.5 %	6,455 %	830,000

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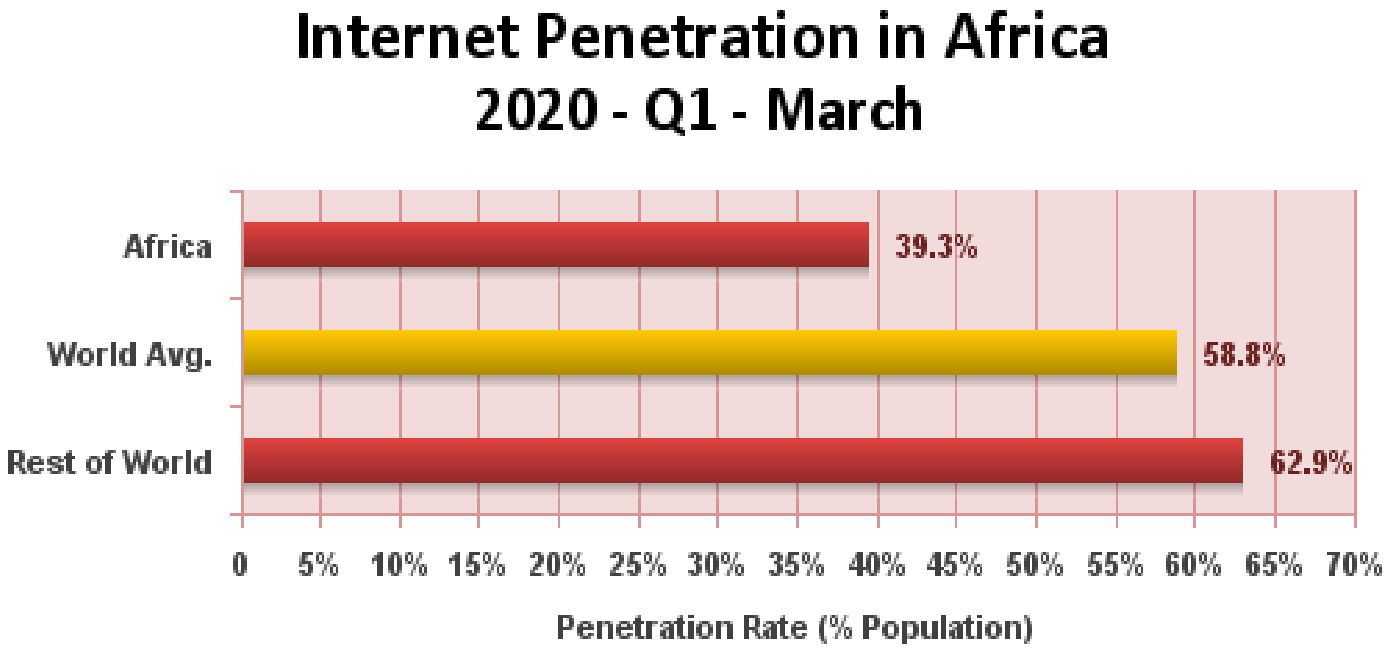
Burkina Faso	20,903,273	10,000	3,704,265	17.7 %	36,942 %	840,000
Burundi	11,890,784	3,000	1,154,568	9.7 %	38,385 %	450,000
Cabo Verde	555,987	8,000	352,120	63.3 %	4,302 %	240,000
Cameroon	26,545,863	20,000	6,128,422	23.1 %	30,542 %	2,700,000
Central African Rep.	4,829,767	1,500	655,466	13.6 %	43,597 %	122,100
Chad	16,425,864	1,000	1,027,932	6.3 %	102,693 %	328,000
Comoros	869,901	1,500	178,500	20.5%	11,800 %	178,500
Congo	5,518,087	500	732,800	13.3 %	146,460 %	732,800
Congo, Dem. Rep.	89,561,403	500	7,475,917	8.3 %	1,495,083 %	3,117,000
Cote d'Ivoire	26,378,274	40,000	11,953,653	45.3 %	29,784 %	4,758,000
Djibouti	988,000	1,400	548,832	55.5 %	39,102 %	211,700
Egypt	102,334,404	450,000	49,231,493	48.1 %	10,840 %	42,400,000
Equatorial Guinea	1,402,985	500	356,891	25.4 %	71,278 %	100,600
Eritrea	3,546,421	5,000	293,343	8.3 %	5,766 %	21,900
Eswatini	1,160,164	10,000	665,245	57.3 %	6,552 %	255,200
Ethiopia	114,963,588	10,000	20,507,255	17.8 %	204,972 %	6,007,000
Gabon	2,225,734	15,000	1,307,641	58.8 %	8,617 %	743,000
Gambia	2,416,668	4,000	442,050	18.3 %	10,951 %	370,100
Ghana	31,072,940	30,000	11,737,818	37.8 %	39,026 %	4,900,000
Guinea	13,132,795	8,000	2,411,672	18.4 %	30,046 %	2,008,000
Guinea-Bissau	1,968,001	1,500	250,000	12.7 %	16,567 %	140,000
Kenya	53,771,296	200,000	46,870,422	87.2 %	23,335 %	7,000,000
Lesotho	2,142,249	4,000	682,990	31.9 %	16,975 %	445,600
Liberia	5,057,681	500	624,610	12.3 %	124,822 %	537,000
Libya	6,871,292	10,000	5,100,000	74.2 %	50,900 %	5,094,000
Madagascar	27,691,018	30,000	2,643,025	9.5 %	8,710 %	2,317,000
Malawi	19,129,952	15,000	2,717,243	14.2 %	18,015 %	500,200
Mali	20,250,833	18,800	12,480,176	61.6 %	66,284 %	1,670,100
Mauritania	4,649,658	5,000	969,519	20.9 %	19,290 %	796,900
Mauritius	1,271,768	87,000	852,000	67.0 %	879 %	852,000
Mayotte (FR)	272,815	n/a	107,940	39.6 %	n/a	91,400
Morocco	36,910,560	100,000	23,739,581	64.3 %	23,639 %	18,330,000
Mozambique	31,255,435	30,000	6,523,613	20.9 %	21,645 %	2,448,000
Namibia	2,540,905	30,000	1,347,418	53.0 %	4,391 %	692,400
Niger	24,206,644	5,000	2,781,266	11.5 %	55,525 %	500,200
Nigeria	206,139,589	200,000	126,078,999	61.2 %	62,939 %	27,120,000
Reunion (FR)	895,312	130,000	553,000	61.8 %	325 %	544,000
Rwanda	12,952,218	5,000	5,981,638	46.2 %	119,532 %	592,400

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Saint Helena (UK)	6,077	n/a	2,300	37.8 %	n/a	2,300
Sao Tome & Principe	219,159	6,500	63,864	29.1 %	882 %	58,400
Senegal	16,743,927	40,000	9,749,527	58.2 %	24,274 %	3,408,000
Seychelles	98,347	6,000	71,300	72.5 %	1,088 %	71,000
Sierra Leone	7,976,983	5,000	1,043,725	13.1 %	20,774 %	693,400
Somalia	15,893,222	200	1,705,300	10.7 %	852,550 %	1,666,500
South Africa	59,308,690	2,400,000	32,615,165	55.0 %	1,259 %	21,280,000
South Sudan	11,193,725	n/a	887,722	7.9 %	n/a	282,901
Sudan	43,849,260	30,000	13,124,100	29.9 %	43,647 %	1,300,000
Tanzania	59,734,218	115,000	23,142,960	38.7 %	20,024 %	4,271,000
Togo	8,278,724	100,000	1,011,837	12.2 %	912 %	658,100
Tunisia	11,818,619	100,000	7,898,534	66.8 %	7,798 %	7,445,000
Uganda	45,741,007	40,000	18,502,166	40.4 %	46,155 %	2,471,000
Western Sahara	597,339	n/a	28,000	4.7 %	n/a	27,000
Zambia	18,383,955	20,000	9,870,427	53.7 %	49,252 %	2,253,000
Zimbabwe	14,862,924	50,000	8,400,000	56.5 %	16,700 %	994,000
TOTAL AFRICA	1,340,598,447	4,514,400	526,710,313	39.3 %	11,567 %	212,911,701
Rest of World	6,456,017,263	82.8 %	4,058,868,405	62.9 %	88.5 %	2,011,815,020
WORLD TOTAL	7,796,615,710	100.0 %	4,585,578,718	58.8 %	100.0 %	2,224,726,721

NOTES: (1) Africa Internet Statistics for Dec 31, 2019, updated as of March 21, 2020. (2) Africa Facebook subscribers are estimated for December 31, 2019. (3) CLICK on each country name for further data on individual countries and regions. (4) Africa Population numbers are mid-year 2020 estimates, based on data from the United Nations Population Division. (5) For definitions, navigation help and methodology, see the site surfing guide. (6) Africa Internet usage information comes from, among others, data published by WWW, ITU , Facebook, and other trustworthy information sources. (7) For Internet growth comparison purposes, baseline Internet usage data for the year 2000 is also displayed. (8) Data from this table may be cited, giving the due credit to Internet World Stats and establishing a link back to www.internetworldstats.com Copyright 2020, © Miniwatts Marketing Group. All rights reserved worldwide.

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Source: Internet World Stats - www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm
526,710,313 estimated Internet users in Africa in March 31, 2020 and
4,585,578,718 Internet users in all the World in March, 2020
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The Use of Social Media in Africa

SOCIAL MEDIA STATS AFRICA

Social Media Stats in Africa - April 2020

Facebook	61.28%
YouTube	17.63%
Twitter	10.12%
Pinterest	6.11%
Instagram	4.63%
Tumblr	0.08%

APR 2019 - APR 2020

Source: Sttistical counter 1999-2020

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The table shows that Facebook has by far the largest percentage of users with 61.28% the remaining social media, YouTube 17.63%, Twitter 10.12%, Pinterest 6.11%, Instagram 4.63% and Tumbir 0.08% have less than 50% of users combined. Africans are coupling their already extensive use of cell phones with a more recent and massive interest in social media - Internet-based tools and platforms that allow people to interact with each other much more than in the past. In the process, Africans are leading what may be the next global trend: a major shift to mobile Internet use, with social media as its main drivers. According to Mary Meeker, an influential Internet analyst, mobile Internet and social media are the fastest-growing areas of the technology industry worldwide, and she predicts that mobile Internet use will soon overtake fixed Internet use.

Studies suggest that when Africans go online (predominantly with their mobile phones) they spend much of their time on social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and so on). Sending and reading e-mails, reading news and posting research queries have become less important activities for Africans.

In recent months Facebook — the major social media platform worldwide and currently the most visited website in most of Africa — has seen massive growth on the continent. The number of African Facebook users out of the world total of 2,224,726,721 now stands at over 212,911,701 by March 2020 and this is still growing. Nigeria with its largest population in Africa currently leads in the number of Facebook subscribers with 27,120,000; this figure is followed by South Africa which has 21,280,000 Facebook subscribers. More than 61.28 per cent of people online in Africa are currently using the platform. Two other social networking websites, Twitter and YouTube, rank among the most visited websites in most African countries Nigeria has the highest figure of Internet users with 126,078,999 out of Africa's total of 526,710,313 users.

IV. Literature Review

a) *Globalization and its Processes*

Media globalization is not a recent phenomenon (Dwayne Winseck and Robert Pike: 2007) it was started in 1850's when domestic telegraph system had greatly extended their reach and become linked to a worldwide network of cable communication. The early stages of globalization were synonymous with imperialism, because of the communication utilized by the western nations, in order to aid the expansion of their empires. Media globalization is defined as the extension phenomenon of a multinational media investments company, resulting from a global oligarchy of companies, which own a variety of media products and distribution technologies as: television, radio, film, music, telecommunication, cable, newspapers, reviews, magazines, publishing houses, internet suppliers and other forms of services attached to the digital media.

However, globalization is also referred to the rapidly developing and ever densening network of interconnections and interdependencies that characterize modern social life. It is "a description of these networks and of their implications- for instance in the various 'flows' of capital, commodities, people, knowledge, information and ideas, crime, pollution, diseases, fashions, beliefs, images and so on- across international boundaries (Tomlinson, 2006).

There is a variety of effects noticed by researchers concerning media globalization. For instance one of the earliest forms of globalization as observed by George Gerbner (1998) are that of successful television programs made not only for the American viewers, but mainly for its international distribution; for example, in Romanian television programs as "Oprah" or "Dr. Oz", but also the scientifically channels, cartoons channels, fashion channels are specific effect of globalization process, in a continuous increase.

According to Robert McChensey eight multinational corporations dominate the global mass-media and also the United States media. These are General Electric, AT&T/ Liberty Media, Disney, Time Warner, Sony, News Corporation, Viacom and Seagram, plus Bertelsmann, the Germany-based conglomerate (McChesney 2005). The multinational corporations become more and more integrated inside the national media, so that, through new companies, are able to distribute their own products. The free market policies have created a proper medium for foreign investments in mass media; the World Trade Organization is threatening local culture by encouraging foreign investments in local media, mainly in developing nations, as a form of cultural protectionism. This researcher consider that the effect of spreading the mass-media multinational corporations lead to cultural imperialism, a loss of local cultural identity.

Chin Chuan Lee in Media Imperialism Reconsidered: The Homogenizing of Television Culture (Lee 1980: 57) suggests that both neo – Marxists and non-Marxists have invoked technological determinism to explain the global homogenization of television culture. That broadcasting has the intrinsic characteristic of continuance- it is not there all at once as physical entity like a newspaper, book, or film, but arrives continuously, minute by minute. Audiences exposed to this continuous flow of communication, have the intrinsic characteristic of limited attention span for difficult material and thus favour less demanding program materials: entertainment (Lee, 1980: 58).

Schiller contends that the products made available from a technology are never neutral. He rejects the myth about the neutrality of technology. He believes that the products, introduction and the uses made of technology "are in fact political and ideological acts which either support or threaten world monopoly

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capitalism" (Schillers 1976) Indeed Schillers views are consistent with his notion that media capitalist ideology is an embodiment of capitalist ideology and interest. (Schiller: 1976) He argues in the same vein as Hamelink (1983) However, Lee on the contrary, suggests that the fact that television are displayed in public places in China for ideological indoctrination undercuts the explanatory power of the technological-cultural determinism. It unduly discounts the potential chances for internal national media policy in stemming foreign dependence. He insists that the pattern of world communication flow may have a close (but not perfect) correspondence with the stratification of the international power structure, which has more to do with the relative ranking of politico-economic strengths of individual countries than the conventional Marxists dichotomies of economic capitalism and socialism. (Lee, 1980)

Electronic colonialism is tied intimately to the information revolution, and just like revolutions before it, the industrial revolution for example, when power and control tips to the dominant culture, colonization occurs. In the world of international mass communications, colonization is the flow of information and media, something UNESCO set out to break up decades before the current state of affairs among international mass communication when it called for a New World Information and Communication Order. The cultures often colonized under electronic colonialism fall to the dominant ideology. "Rather than fight, cultures often blend" (Hachten & Scotton, 2007: 2).

A prominent example of electronic colonialism falls into the realm of music television. Specifically, Music Television (MTV) has focused on youth across the world. MTV promotes mostly western music and pumps western influence into countries across the world, MTV is owned by Viacom, one of the big 5 (McPhail, 2010). The hegemonic infusion of Western, mostly American, values through fast food culture, clothing styles, entertainment and language communicates certain values to the recipients, to the detriment of indigenous values, and provides passage for cultural penetration as well as political and economic control by the Western forces (Marsella, 2005) The increasing connectivity is in many ways an aspect of our daily life. It is recognized as an everyday routine practice. It is seen in our use of communications technologies such as mobile phones, computers, email, the internet and in the environment we build and live in and in the sort of food we eat too. We are living in a more interconnected world more than the world we lived in thirty or .forty years ago. (Tomlinson, 2006) It is this increasing connectivity that leads people to believe globalization is inevitably leading to a single global culture. However, Tomlinson cautions that the increasing connectivity should by no means be construed that the world is becoming unified. Tomlinson (2006)

V. Theoretical/Methodological Conceptualization

Although there have been a great deal of discussion about globalization of the media industry and its social and economic implications, most research on the subject has tended to focus on macroeconomic and policy issue. (Hollifield 2004:103) Studies have shown that media have long term effect on society, influencing such things as values, language and behavior.

The broad research framework for digital media has ranged from socio-cultural theories to Internet use – and-effect research and the ways the characteristics of the medium and its interactivity affect our relations with its content. (Pavlik 2011)

However, this study is going to employ the Critical theory approach which is broadly a theoretical approach influenced by Marxist notions of the role of ideology, exploitation, capitalism and the economy in understanding and transforming society. Critical theory owes its origin to the work of post 1933 émigré scholars from the Marxist School of Applied Social Research in Frankfurt. Notable among these scholars are Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Leo Lowenthal, Herbert Marcuse and Walter Benjamin.

Horkheimer (1982: 244) suggests that a critical theory is distinguishable from traditional theory because it has a specific practical purpose: which is to seek human emancipation, to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them'. He also said that critical theory is adequate only if it meets three criteria: it must be explanatory, practical and normative .Critical analysis must be empirical social enquiry and be framed by normative philosophical argument.

There are many branches of critical theory; however, Fred Frejes (1984) suggests that there are three main research approaches following Curran, Gurevitch and Woollacott (1982). The first approach is the structuralist approach to media analysis which draws upon ideas found in linguistics, anthropology, semiotics and psychoanalysis. This approach is concerned with the study of the system and processes of signification and representation in the media. The second major approach is the political economy approach which focuses on the economic structure and processes of media production (Murdock and Golding, 1977) in this approach, the major thrust of this research is the study of the trend towards increasing monopolization and concentration of control within the media industries. The third approach is the cultural studies approach which is similar to the structuralist approach in that it focuses on the media message.

Cultural studies approach is the branch of critical theory which tends to focus more on mass

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communication. Cultural studies intellectual heritage stems from Critical theory. Critical theory on the other hand differs from positivist social science from the point of view that positivist social science researchers inappropriately employ physical science research methodology and apply it to human behavior. The Critical theorists criticize the positivist social science researcher of using various statistical techniques and research in order to arrive at a natural law of society and behavior which they say cannot be determined. Cultural studies research examines the symbolic environment created by mass media to study the role that mass media play in culture and society by utilizing a host of disciplines ranging from anthropology and sociology to political science and literary theory. Traditional mainstream research on media in the empirical behaviorist approach is not only limited in its scope but also tends to be intellectually one dimensional. Quantitative and behaviorist empiricism restricted to individual acts, facts and data has served limited purposes and has fallen short on difficult and important issues, thus increased empiricism serves only to compound rather than solve problems. (Real, 1989) However, it is significant to state that behaviorism's emphasis on tangible data is not inimical to cultural studies. Cultural studies uses empiricism in as much as it begins analysis and interpretation with verifiable facts. It will then be considered as empirical. Cultural studies on the other hand differs from behaviorism in that it goes beyond individual facts to perceive general patterns and infer broad characteristics that may be inaccessible to the behaviorists.(Real,1989:53)

VI. The Homogenizing Effect of Globalization

The homogenizing effect of globalization is achieved through Cultural Transmission which refers to the transference of the dominant culture, as well as its subcultures from one generation to the next or to immigrants. This function includes socialization which the media perform in helping individuals learn society's rules or how to fit into that society. Cultural transmission is also seen as creating a homogenized culture by promoting mindless consumerism as a means of achieving societal happiness rather than imparting more humanistic and more rewarding values. (Pavlik and McIntosh: 2011: 21)

How is globalization seen as affecting nationality, culture and identity? Tomlinson suggests that "globalization lies at the heart of modern culture; cultural practices lie at the heart of globalization" ([Tomlinson:2006:1). This conceptualization risks defining culture and globalization in associational, parallel terms. Culture exists within specific groups before the densening of social, political and economic interconnections, but the two-way effects are clearly identifiable.

Bidney (1944) defines culture from an anthropological perspective and says it is "acquired capabilities, habits or customs; and that culture is a quality or attribute of human social behavior and has no independent existence of its own" ([Bidney 1944: 30). This notion of the dependence of culture on some form of medium for it to exist is important; Bidney adds that "human culture is acquired or created by man as a member of society and that it is communicated largely by language" ([Bidney:1944 31).

Culture is the way of life of a people. There are many cultures in Africa, Africa is inhabited by various ethnic nationalities with their different languages, modes of dressings, eating, dancing and even greeting habits. But in spite of their various differences in cultural practices, Africans do share a lot of similarities. A Nigerian culture is closer to Ghanaian culture than say Oriental or Western culture. Although within these cultures also there are cultural variations.

"In discussing African culture and values, we are not presupposing that all African societies have the same explanation(s) for events, the same language, and same mode of dressing and so on. Rather, there are underlying similarities shared by many African societies which, when contrasted with other cultures, reveal a wide gap of difference" (Idang: 2015) In other words African culture is distinct from those of Europeans, Orientals or Asiatic culture.

African culture as Ezedike (2009: 455) opines:

> Refers to the sum total of shared attitudinal inclinations and capabilities, art, beliefs, moral codes and practices that characterize Africans. It can be conceived as a continuous, cumulative reservoir containing both material and non material elements that are socially transmitted from one generation to another. African culture, therefore, refers to the whole lot of African heritage.

Numerous studies by anthropologists suggest that the traditional values of a people are closely related to the pace with which they accept or reject the demands of modern industrial or commercial operations. Since no society in the modern world exists in a vacuum, it is pre-established patterns of culture which, to a large extent, determine whether that society accepts or resists innovation and change and the speed with which this is done. (Puye:1998) Thus some cultures are more amenable to change than others.

Some of the leading cultural theorists in communication are names like Stuart Hall, James Carey, James Curran, Tony Bennett, Michael Gurevitch, Janet Woollacott, Raymond Williams and many others. For instance, James Carey defines culture as a process, but it can also refer to some shared attribute of a human group (such as the physical environment, tools, religion, customs and practices or their whole way of life). Carey,

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1975 Culture can also refer to texts and symbolic artefacts. Moreover, Carey in his ritual view of communication suggests that "communication is a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed" In accordance with this view of communication, the act of reading a newspaper or watching television for instance, has less to do with receiving information than with participating in a shared cultural experience that portrays and confirms the world in a certain way. By reading the paper we are actually participating in a ritual that produces and reproduces certain socio cultural norms that are played out through our actions and interactions with others. The same dynamic is said to take place with online media such as posting photos on MySpace, Facebook one is not simply transmitting information but sharing ways of doing things and ways of thinking that actually create the society we live in through our repeated actions. (Pavlik and McIntosh 2011:25)

One of the characteristics of cultural globalization is cultural homogenization, (Ervin and Smith 2008) and it refers to the reduction in_cultural diversity (Barker 2008) through the popularization and diffusion of a wide array of cultural symbols—not only physical objects but customs, ideas and values. (Jennings 2010) O'Connor has defined it as "the process by which local cultures are transformed or absorbed by a dominant outside culture. (O'Connor 2006) Cultural homogenization is described as the single most important hallmark of cultural globalization and it suggests that all cultural barriers are broken down such that the local cultures are assimilated into one single dominant culture, in this case the American culture.

Cultural homogenization can impact national identity and culture, which would be "eroded by the impact of global cultural industries and multinational media". (Kirby 2000) The term is usually used in the context of Western culture dominating and destroying other cultures. The process of cultural homogenization in the context of the domination of the Western (American), capitalist culture is also known as McDonaldization, (Jennings 2010)] coca-colonization, (Ritzer 2008)] Americanization (Kirby 2000) or Westernization [Alon 2006) and criticized as a form of cultural imperialism (Barker 2008) and neo-colonialism. The direct influence of foreign consumption patterns and life-styles that are a negation of society's cultural values with destructive influences.

Debates on the exact nature and effects of cultural globalization show wide variance. Some view cultural globalization in terms of "the homogenization of the world under the auspices of American popular culture or Western consumerism in general" ([Tomlinson 2006. 327). This implies that cultures are not discerning. Neither are they seen as capable of surviving the onslaught of Western/American consumerism to adapt only those features and products that are compatible with their culture, or those that propagate the course of such cultures. Moreover, they are seen as not capable of being selective.

In the process of globalization, technological change and marketization accompany a steady increase in the internalization of cultural production and distribution which is referred to as Americanization (McQuail 2010: 114) The internalization is seen as leading to more homogenization or cultural synchronization (Hamelink, 1983: 2) This process according to Hamelink implies that the decisions regarding the cultural development of a given country are made in accordance with the interests and needs of a powerful central nation. They are then imposed with subtle but devastating effectiveness without regard for the adaptive necessities of the dependent nation (Hamelink 1983) Moreover, such global media may appear value free, but it incorporates many of the western capitalism, individualism and consumerism. (Hamelink: 1983)

However, other scholars have argued that while there is a significant global influence of Americanism/ Western consumerism, it is not always adopted wholesale by the target cultures. For instance, the transformationalists, "describe the intermingling of cultures and peoples as generating cultural hybrids and new global cultural networks" ([Tomlinson, 2006). Marwan Kraidy (2005). suggests that "since hybridity involves the fusion of two hitherto relatively distinct forms, styles or identities, cross-cultural contact, which often occurs across national borders as well as across cultural boundaries, is a requisite for hybridity" Cultural contacts between individuals, groups and nations, which globalization entails, particularly through communication, provides the interactional forum that facilitate the fusion and/or creation of hybrid cultures.

Furthermore, critics of cultural homogenization theory point out that as different cultures mix, homogenization is less about the spread of a single culture as about the mixture of different cultures, as people become aware of other cultures and adopt their elements.[For example they point to the fact that there are non-American culture affecting the West in such areas like world music and the popularization of non-American television (Latin American telenovelas, Japanese anime, Indian Bollywood), religion (Islam, Buddhism), food, and clothing in the West, though they suggest that in most cases this maybe insignificant when compared to the Western influence in other countries. [Hiramoto 2012) The process of adoption of elements of global culture to local cultures is known as glocalization [(Barker, 2008) or cultural heterogenization. [Clarke 2008)

In assessing the impact of globalization for example, Pieterse (2000) suggests that in economics, economic internalization, globalizing production and

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global finance characterize globalization. For international relations, increasing interstate relations and progression of global politics are evident. While in the case of cultural studies, global communications and worldwide cultural standardization-Coca-Colonization and McDonaldization ([Ritzer 1993:65), are primary indicators of globalization. This approach views globalization in multi-dimensional terms, rather than as one unitary process with net effects and outcomes wherever it is encountered. Indeed, Featherstone (1990) argues that "there may be emerging sets of 'third cultures', which themselves are conduits for all sorts of diverse cultural flows" ([Ritzer:1993.1).

Third cultures embrace and aggregate the most critical, utilitarian elements of global cultures, especially those connected with technologically driven processes-transport and communication. And contrary to Stuart Hall's characterization of encoder-message-decoder, in the process of communication within a globalized culture, an individual negotiates a "third, hybrid identity" by utilizing features of all the collective identity and group memberships that they have acquired through socio-political, economic and socio-cultural processes e.g., migration, emigration, education.

Some authors, (Robertson, Featherstone, Ritzer, Pieterse and Appadurai,) have studied the dimensions of global culture and have been able to distinguish one dimension from another. However, one question asked in the 1990s was whether global culture was just the "Americanization" of lifestyles and cultural symbols (for example: Coca Cola). From the sum total of the research of the authors listed above emerged the conclusion that inside of each local society, there had been an increase in "cultural variability" and, for these individuals, a newer and richer offering of possibilities (Cotesta 1999: 96). In short, "cultural pluralism" increased in every society.

One way by which cultural influence takes place is through cultural osmosis. Culture is not a one way process; there is exchange and a process in which one culture influences the other... One culture absorbs the elements of another culture without knowing that is being conscious that this process is taking place. Elements of one culture is diffused into another through an osmotic effect, the process of gradual or unconscious assimilation of ideas, knowledge, values, mores and way of life.

Cultural theorists underscore the dynamism of culture as such emphasize the non static nature of culture. It is constantly changing, or more precisely, agents of culture, i.e., human beings, are always interacting with other agents. These interactions have temporal or permanent effects on both the "originators" and the "targets" of such contacts. (Magu, 2015) They are facilitated by different processes, which over time have varied from economic to social, political, and religious reasons, facilitated by transport, communication and underwritten by technology. Globalization accelerates cultures' interactions and facilitates transmission of values from one group to another.

VII. Conceptual Framework

Social Media expert Brian Solis defines social media as a shift in how people discover, read and share news and information and content. "It's a fusion of sociology and technology, transforming monologue (one to many) into dialogue (many to many)" (Solis, 2007) Similarly, John Jantsh, defines social media as "the use of technology combined with social interaction to create or co-create value" Social media therefore is an umbrella term that defines the various activities that integrate technology, social interaction and the construction of words and pictures in a manner in which information is presented and shared in such a way that there is meaning and understanding among the people interacting. (Jantsh 2005)

The social media interacting in the public sphere, in a homogenizing process ensures that various public spheres, interact with each other, thus continuing the local-global dynamic, will continue to privilege a particular kind of person. This homogenized person, interacting as a 'sous-veilling' 'pro-sumer' (consuming and producing) pushes this homogenization of public spheres around the world. On the surface this appears as the ultimate form of localized media creation. Merkovity contends that the 'sameness' produced by this process can deliver interesting affects/effects on the nation-state and media interaction. As a result we may not have a great difference between public spheres of nation-states that we might presume to exist. Media globalization seems to have entered a process whereby nation-states and their citizens are entering a stage of homogenization of the actual tools of social media. Simply put, if everyone uses Facebook, does this create sameness or open the door to difference and variety? (Merkovity, 2013).

"We find these logics of sameness demonstrated in relation to the various ways in which social media 'flattens', often by its very architecture, particular 'styles' of selfhood. We examine this flattening in relation to a number disparate, but related phenomena: we consider the ways in which Facebook operates as a form of lateral surveillance panopticon, and one in which middle-class professional norms govern the 'correct' use of the site;" (Merkovity: 2013).

As Merkovity further argues in this global process of sameness by social media" Rather than tending toward radical individualism we argue that the flattening effects of these technologies, themselves encroaching further and further into the everyday of citizens around the world, encourage a homogenization of affect, if not effects". (Merkovity: 2013)

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Although these technologies have rapidly spread worldwide along with it is the notion that ICT would be the vector of a linear and inevitable globalization that facilitates a process of cultural homogenization for the benefit of the western countries. This approach has been criticized and nuanced since the 1980s through research emphasizing the diversity of national industrial structures and of choices made in terms of public policies (Mattelart and Schmucler 1983, Delapierre and Zimmermann, 1986). (Cultural industries of the Global South http://com.revues.org)

VIII. Empirical Review

Steger (2013) in examining the effects of globalization and homogenization of culture in the fast food restaurant suggests that we may be witnessing the rise of an increasingly homogenized popular culture heavily influenced by the western world in which the ideals, values and cultures are being spread (Stager 2013:75) In the same vein, sociologist George Ritzer contends that fast food restaurants are not only dominating "more and more sectors of American Society" but also those all around the world which is also known as McDonaldization (Ritzer,1993:1) He further narrates that "As fast food industries worldwide begin to adopt the same health standards (or lack thereof) of stores like McDonald, health become a central concern for customers globally." (Steger 2013:76) We find that People are eating the same type of food. Among the food processing technology companies, McDonalds is one of the most loved fast food chains for gourmet meals popular for its hamburgers, French fries and milk shakes which could be found in some of the remotest parts of the world influencing their social values and customs. In Africa, McDonalds is present in four countries, namely, Morocco, Egypt, South Africa and Mauritania. In these countries alone, there are about 387 McDonald's restaurants. However, curiously they have no presence in the most populous African country, Nigeria.

Dominos Pizza is one of the biggest fast food giants in Africa. Taste Holdings which is South Africa's biggest pizza delivery chains has won the right to grow Dominos Pizza in Africa and they are opening up markets from Nigeria to Angola. What these fast food chains are creating in Africa is an unwillingly adopted consumer culture that is reflective of western society.

In April 2014, Dominos Pizza celebrated its 50th store in South Africa. Other food processing companies present in Africa include Burger King and Cold store Creamery in South Africa. Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) is present in Cape Town, Edenvalle, Potch Die Balt and Potchetstroom in South Africa. Similar KFC chains are maintained 24 hours in Lagos and Abuja in Nigeria. Other food processing and beverages companies with heavy presence in Africa include, Cadbury FMCG Multinational, Coca Cola FMCG, Nestle, Friesland Foods WAMCO, and 7UP Bottling Company.

Julian Cayla and Giana Eckhardt (2008) point out that people become united through common brand experience rather than national belonging. Furthermore, this leads to a deeper shared experience of globalization. The more people consume and interact in the same name brand culture, they begin to feel connected despite the physical distance. They are brought together through the internet technology. Although people are far apart, there is a sense of a global community founded on sameness through global brand cultures rather than diversity. This view is consistent with those who argue that the world is inevitably being homogenized into one whole global village through the power of digital technology as espoused several decades ago by the Canadian communication scholar Marshall Mcluhan.

In the globalization process, the social media has become a key factor. The emergence of the Internet and the World Wide Web as public access media has made international distribution possible for all media products and those who want to make their products marketable and available to consumers.

Although media content uploads onto the web is mostly for local audiences, i.e. for the U.S, Europe or Australia consumption, most of it is available for the global audiences and that includes the African audience. When McDonalds advertises its Big Mac on websites, it is mostly for American audiences but it is also available for audiences around the world. Thus McDonalds and other food processing companies have leveraged on their social media use to broaden their reach to consumers.

But are fast food restaurants around the world really identical? Steger says it is one thing "to acknowledge the existence of powerful homogenizing tendencies in the world but it is quite another to assert that the cultural diversity existing on our planet is destined to vanish" (Steger 2013).

Steger says that by looking at the different food items on menus around the many fast food restaurants we see that many styles of food have been appropriated "the borrowing and changing the meanings of commodities, cultural products ….. by putting them into new contexts" rather than made in the exact same manner (Sturken & Cartright 2001) For example, Japan introduced the Black Ninja Burger in Japan's Burger King. Similarly, in China, the Dry Pork and Seaweed Donut is introduced in Dunkin Donuts. While in Australia, the lamb Burger is introduced in McDonalds. In the KFC food chain, there are 150 countries with KFC franchise and the most recent market is Africa where the company is targeting middle class Africans. While the same generic KFC brand is served in all the KFC restaurants around the world, the original fried chicken pieces taste

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the same in all countries with the same herbs and spices, customers get the exact same menu prepared in the exact same flavors, however, as part of marketing strategy, the food served along with it is different in every country. Products are unique to a country as they appeal to that county's demographics. In the USA, the biscuits are added and it counts on the variation to draw customers. In Singapore, the Shrimp Nuggets is introduced in Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) Singapore. In Nigeria for instance, the KFC has added "moi moi" a local variety that is made out of beans in addition to the fried chicken. Customers have the choice of ordering online and have home delivery in Lagos and Abuja by Jumia Foods Nigeria. The global operations of KFC are overseen by Yum International which is headquartered in Louisville Kentucky. Yum International manages KFC in 11 different countries that includes China, Russia and India.

KFC is on Facebook with large followership. Photos of the different varieties of KFCs offered ranging from chicken wings; drumsticks and strips along with KFC Burger and ice cream are displayed. It also uploads videos with adverts on KFC 5-in 1 with Pepsi Cola. In Lagos there are 7 restaurant outlets that serve the crunchy chicken which could be ordered along with a bowl of either Fried rice or Jollof rice.

Although Steger acknowledges globalization as a powerful force he is nevertheless quick to point out that it does not mean the ultimate extinction of the "diverse cultural rainbow as we know it" (Steger 2013) He also contests the idea of complete homogenization which is the idea that there is only a one way flow from the West to the rest of the world. It fails to recognize that people have agency and control over our actions; we are not all just passive shoppers or designers in the market place. (Steger 2013) Meanings and values are negotiated and not just absorbed. He further argues that there is a complex interaction of homogenizing tendencies in tension with cultural diversity. "One does not mean the end of the other" He argues.

Scholars have argued that the effect of Globalization on the African culture cannot be divorced from a long tradition that began over five hundred years ago with the advent of imperialism. Globalization could be described as the latest phase of that uninterrupted history of domination and subjugation of peoples and nations. It is a tradition of political, economic and cultural domination of some nations over others." (Ugbam, Chukwu, and Ogbo 2014: 66)

For instance, scholars such as Ogunjimi and Na'Allah (2005) have observed that decades of the effect of globalization on the Nigerian culture have had negative effect on peculiar Nigerian cultural values such as languages being eroded by the pop culture. They lament the fact that greeting norms, cuisine, appearances and dressing, customs, occupations, religion and cultural components are fast giving way to acculturation. "the suppression and subjugation of African culture," a tragic phenomenon that is fast destroying the original cultural complexion of not only the budding generation but even the adults". (Ogunjimi and Na'Allah 2005:36)

Similarly, Oni (2005) has observed a trend in which the Nigerian Youth are rapidly losing touch with their cultural values and this he says could be observed by their bizarre dressing, dancing and language which has affected other aspects of social life. Nicolaides (2012:123) has also observed among the youth of South Africa as a group that has abandoned the African culture and language. The teenagers try to be hip by imitating the American rap artists as role models who promote promiscuous behavior especially in the lyrics of their music. These scholars are united in their blame of globalization for the negative effect it has had on the cultural values of the African Youth. They stress the fact that the youth are supposed to be the promoters of our culture while at the same time helping to ensure that it is transmitted from one generation to another in this way ensuring that the African culture does not become extinct and replaced by western culture.

Although these scholars point out the negative effects of globalization, they also acknowledge the positive impacts of globalization on the African ways of life (of which they say are many) For instance, Nicolaides (2012:123) acknowledges the fact that in some cases, ethically sound values on issues such as human rights and democracy are spread through Americanization which are today universal values accepted by all countries.

IX. Conclusion

The discourse on the effects of Global digital technologies on the African culture suggests a belief and fear that digital technologies especially the social media is fast incorporating Africa through a process of globalization into a homogenized global culture. That wittingly or unwittingly more and more Africans are adopting one culture which is western and is more of American culture, - Americanization. American norms, values and practices are being conveyed across the Atlantic as the suitable mode of behaviour for Africans inculcating an ethos of a western, mainly American cultural industry. The mode by which technology is facilitating this media globalization is a process whereby nation-states and their citizens are entering a stage of homogenization using the actual tools of social media. The homogenizing effect of globalization is achieved through Cultural Transmission that is creating mindless consumerism In Africa, more and more people are using Facebook, although this creates sameness its effects are producing a variety of differences in the way societies are reacting.

To corroborate Kraidy and Burke, cultural contacts between individuals, groups and nations,

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which globalization entails, particularly through communication, provide the interactional forum that facilitates the fusion and/or creation of hybrid cultures. This hybridity is most noticeable in the way the different cultures of Africa and Asian countries have adapted the global fast food restaurants to local conditions (Glocalization). However, we must acknowledge the existence of powerful homogenizing tendencies of the world's Global food chains McDonaldization which is being aided by social media marketization. It is not unlikely that the African is able to assert his culture for long in the face of the onslaught of Cultural Globalization but it is quite another to believe that the cultural diversity or the heterogeneity existing on our planet will eventually disappear. Culture as has been pointed out in this discourse is not a one way street, in the process of global cultural homogenization cultural osmotic effect also takes place.

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