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An Assessment of Cultural Imperialism from Globalization: An Analysis of the Impact of Facebook Social Media in Kenya

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Abstract:

Globalization of the media is perceived as an influence on indigenous cultures of the world. The Internet and its accessibility are viewed as having contributed to the massive flow of information globally, creating a global village. The study zeros in on the rise of social networks and singles out the Facebook which it subjects to the study. The aims and objectives of the study are determining access to the internet, gauging on the rise of Internet's social networks' and their influence on the users' cultural orientations and also determining the impact of social networks as tools for mass media. The study gives insights to varied views from scholars over their perceptions of the media and its contribution to perceived cultural imperialism. From the data collected the findings revealed that the internet is accessible but users find it costly. The majority of the internet users on Facebook embraced the social networks as positive communications mode that did not necessarily alter their cultural orientation. The study discovered the widespread uses of Facebook citing it as an effective tool for mass communication. The study recommends that the internet be accessed in all learning institutions, while social networks be used for promoting cultural diversity.

Keywords: Social media, Facebook, globalization, culture, internet

1. Introduction

'Globalization' is labeled differently to imply different things to different people. Ibrahim, A (2013) elucidates that some view it as the movement of people, language, ideas, and products around the world. Others perceive it as the dominance of multinational corporations and the destruction of cultural identities. Ibrahim, A (2013) philosophizes it as the broadly expansion of global linkages bringing with it the social life on a global scale that allows the growth of a global consciousness. From a technological angle, Sheffield, Korotayev, and Grinin (2013) discern that technologies play a major role in globalization facilitating the transfer of ideas and culture, resulting in a homogenization of consumerist culture across borders that threaten to disrupt and permanently alter indigenous values.

All the scholars above alluded to the flow of ideas occurring in multiple directions, resulting in less homogenization and more diversification of ideas and lifestyles. Both views make assumptions that globalization has expanded the importance and the sharing of information that have an effect on cultural lifestyles. Most notably, Sheffield, Korotayev, and Grinin (2013) point to the growing dominance of consumer-oriented western, media and entertainment products, and how they contribute to a one-way transmission of ideas and values that result in the displacement of indigenous cultures.

1.1. Proliferation of the Internet

Kachawanya (2009) acclaims Africa for being part of the internet technology revolution, reflected in the acquisition of the fibre-optic that envisaged increasing internet access by a huge margin. Kachawanya (2009) underscored gains from the internet access and widespread use in the developed nations because of its universal accessibility, fostering communication of ideas. Shabnoor and Tajinder (2016) also positively view global networking evincing that it is the best tool for branding and promotion of any products or business. These two scholars viewed the internet as the contemporary avenues for linking the general public and the government since political affairs' discourse could easily be carried out with the public through social media networks or platforms. Rice, Haynes, Royce and Thompson (2016) and Goswami and Singh (2016) accede that digital communication technologies allow users ease and frequent access to social media platforms and services such as 'Facebook'.

Mweu (2000) accounts for the growth of the internet in Kenya, tracing its availability way back in 1993, when it was a preserve of a few. Mweu (2000) documented that the internet's only access was through Gopher; a service which offered access to text based information and was leased through international lines. Subscribers of the first provider of web-based internet service enjoyed the first ever web browser software-Mosaic and in 1995, the first commercial Internet Service Provider (ISP), 'Formnet', began operating. Competition increased seeing the entry of three other ISPs. In July 1999 the Government of Kenya liberalized the telecommunications market in Kenya which saw the formation of the Communication Commission of Kenya (CCK) which is now known as the Communication Authority of Kenya (CAK) that regulates the sector (Mweu, 2000)

1.2. The Statement of the Problem

Yu, Anaya, Miao, Lehto, and Wong (2017) reckon approbation of the internet services have been diversified and easily accessed giving rise to popularity of social networks. The Internet Users Survey, IUS (2018) cites Facebook as the giant of them all documenting active users' subscription of over 175 million. The impression is that these users are apparently busy on the site. The survey states that in one-month alone users upload more than 850 million photos and over 5 million videos.

While this sounds like a lot, the question would be whether these statistics are applicable to the developing World. Since Facebook has gained momentum in the internet lifestyle in Kenya, this study aimed at ascertaining or dispelling these assumptions.

1.3. Research Questions

The study aimed at answering the following research questions:

- What are the factors that determine internet accessibility?
- What influence does the Facebook, a social network, have on the cultural orientation of its users?
- What impact does the Facebook have as a tool of media globalization?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Relevance of Cultural Imperialism Theory

The study was guided by Herbert Schiller's Cultural Imperialism Theory that harbored disquietude for the slow death of cultures of the countries in the developing World resulting from the domination and proliferation of the media from the West. Schiller (1976) pegged this on globalization that allows free flow of information disregarding national barriers. A critical analysis of the definitions of globalization indicates a sense of liberalization and greater openness. There is interplay between the domestic and foreign liberalization where the former customizes domestic markets more in conformity with the operating forces from markets abroad. Increased economic interaction among nations and the communication network has been facilitated by the removal of administrative barriers to allow international movement of goods, services, labor capital.

Joo and Teng (2017) espouse that electronic media has turned the world into a global audience, a view disputed for its perceived social negative effects and influence. Herbert Schiller, the major proponent of the Cultural Imperialism view in favour of the developing World evinces that the process of globalization has a detrimental effect on indigenous culture.

However, McQuail (2001: 62) disputed this argument reinforcing the interdependence between the media and society. These two continue to interact and influence each other. The media represents the cultural industry which responds to the demand from society for information and entertainment, stimulating innovations and contributing to a changing socio-cultural climate which sets off new demands for communication, which perhaps has prompted the rise of the social networks such as Facebook.

Nonetheless, Schiller (2002) disputes McQuail's approach, defending the argument that the media is a catalyst in the 'modernization' process through introduction of western values at the expense of traditional values and the loss of 'authentic' local cultures. This view demonstrates an imperialistic process, in a conscious and deliberate systematic subordinate of smaller and developing countries to the interests of the western values.

3. Literature Review

3.1. The Internet Technology

Joo and Teng (2017) posit that the world is interconnected through a complex web of transnational networks. Global interconnectedness is also what demarcates the internet, a medium defying physical proximity, allowing people to communicate and interact. Described as the network of networks, the internet is said to define the world people live in. A world in which the growing significance of boundary-crossing networks is forcing people to reconfigure their societies as interdependent parts of a global whole (Joo and Teng, 2017)

Friedman (2007) propounds that the internet communication technology has changed peoples' lives, citing people's preferences for the digitized communication to the traditional post office. The argument advanced is that the internet supplicates an enormous amount of information at people's disposal and convenience. Nonetheless, Whitney (2014) laments about the price the society has had to pay for the approbation of this technology. From the African perspective, this information superhighway has a considerable amount of information that is undesirable such as pornography and many others. This raises concerns over internet regulation.

On the contrary, Friedman (2007) is constructive that the growth of the internet has enhanced profitability by reducing the costs of transacting business globally. It has also increased the flow of ideas globally, while reducing the distance between cultures and individuals, although the global export of cultural norms and practices is sometimes perceived to have negative impacts on local cultures.

3.2. Cultural Identity

Edward Said, a founder of the academic field of postcolonial studies, examined the relationship between the West and its imperial conquests within the context of culture. Said (1994) did not view imperialism as something contained in

the era of history, but rather as something more fluid. The scholar systematically addressed colonial and postcolonial forms of communication through the construct of the western literary canon. Said (1994) made reference to the manner which subjugated peoples were represented within literary works and other forms of communication. These works negatively affected both the peoples and also the cultures in which the people live in. In his view, imperialism is not about a specific moment in history, but rather a continuing interdependent dialogue between subject peoples and the dominant super powers.

Said (1994) suggested that the end of imperialistic influence upon communication forms did not end with colonial rule. They have continued to exist within postcolonial culture because of the circumstance in which subjugated peoples have been placed. Throughout his analysis of culture, Said (1994) focused on the limitations of subjugated peoples within western culture and the reasons for their continued disadvantaged position.

While the developing World was positioning itself for recognition and restoration of its identity, Hall's (1997) divergent view termed it as a crisis of 'identity'. Hall (1997) advanced that identity is merely a celebration of one set of ideas while dismissing 'others'. Stuart Hall's perspective disputed Herbert Schiller's approach insinuating that identities are constituted within and not outside representation.

Hall (1997) further dismisses pre-existing 'essential self' who is represented or expressed. Instead subjectivity and identity are constructed within discourse. Hall (1997) refuted a unitary identity approach and argued that every self is unique in his or her own right and that identity is always unstable, fragmented and contingent, since it is dependent on the exclusion of that which is 'other'.

On the question of identity, Said (1994) viewed it as a defence of identities threatened with extinction or subordinated because the cultures were considered inferior, a construction of reality in the eyes of the past deliberately invented for present reasons. Said (1994) abandoned the view that identity is the affirmations of roots, cultural pride and nationalism. However, Hall (1997) affirmed that the recovery and celebration of 'roots' was an important phenomenon. Contrary to Said's view, Hall believed that history played a significant role in the emergence of many social movements. In Hall's own interventions in the debate about identity, he recast the terms in which identity is understood. Identity is not a hidden essence to be uncovered, but an active process of representation or discursive construction.

3.3. The Influence of the Media

Talbot (2007) underscored that the importance of the media in the modern world is incontrovertible; asserting that that discourse played a vital role in constituting people's realities. This implied that the power and influence of media discourse is clear. The media has the integrated technological organization that invites or discourages certain types of messages, programming, or content, based on the media's own internal needs. These needs to a large extent will control the content. Talbot (2007) assumed that the global media could be simplified from the strengths of the 'sender - message-receiver' model implying total impact on its recipients.

Hall (1980) disputed the assumptions inferred above terming them as simplistic. Instead, Hall put a special emphasis on the importance of specific cultural conditions at every stage of any communication process. Creators of media texts produce them in particular contexts, drawing on shared knowledge frameworks, professional norms etc. The same media texts are engaged with audience in different cultural contexts where resources drawn upon to understand them cannot be assumed to be the same. The process involved in encoding the meanings of media texts are not necessarily the same as those involved in decoding. Hall (1980) espied that each recipient decodes independently and meanings will or may differ to a great extent. Assumed 'meanings' by producers should not be assumed to be similar to audiences. This argument collided with Schiller's views.

Schiller (2002) asserted that there is a large trend in the conscious dissemination of western attitudes and values which he described as cultural imperialism and which in his view, involved more than simple consumer goods but other principles such as freedom and democracy. Schiller fears that many cultures around the world are and would gradually disappear due to overwhelming influence of corporate and western cultural influences. Nevertheless, this view could be perceived as too extreme with regard to the improved technology and other developments which in actual sense have reinforced resistance to these cultural infusions and dominations.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Research Design

The study population comprised students and staff of the Technical University of Mombasa fraternity in Kenya. It targeted the full-time student population of about 5,000 and a non-teaching staff population of 250. The assumption was that the population had access to the institution's ICT facilities. The research problem posed was studied using both the quantitative and qualitative survey methods. Questionnaires were used for the quantitative data and interviews for the qualitative data. Only 10% of the respondents were subjected to the interviews. The simple random sampling was adopted to determine the classes for inclusion in the study. Once these were identified, they were subjected to the systematic random sampling procedure. In this case, the number of the sample required per class was 27; therefore, this was divisible by the total number students in the identified classes to get the K^{th} number which was used to determine the sample. The non-teaching staff population was randomly selected.

4.2. Sampling

The sample size comprised 270 students and 30 members of non-teaching staff, giving the study sample a total of 300. The 270 students were selected through stratified random method. The sampling considered 27 students from each department, bringing a total of 270 students from all the 10 departments. Meanwhile 30 non-teaching staff workers were randomly drawn from all the departments. 300 questionnaires were sent out but only 266 were received back thus giving a response rate of 89%.

5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

5.1. Age of Respondents

A majority of the respondents at 69% were aged between 21 and 25 years, followed by 15% who were the eldest respondents; thirty-one years old and above and 9% who were 20 years old and below. The minority at 7% were aged between 26 and 30 years. Figure 1 represents the finding.

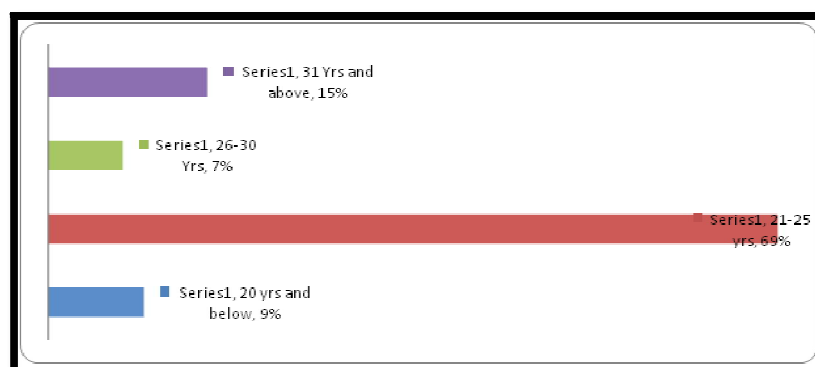


Figure 1: Age of Respondents

5.1.1. Access to the Internet

Respondents who had access to the internet included: a majority of the respondents at 63%, aged between 21-25 years, 11% and 8% of respondents aged 31 years and above and 20 years and below respectively. However, a total of 12% had no access citing lack of basic computer skills, unavailable service, high costs involved, and lack of interest. Table 1 shows this finding.

		Do you have access to the internet?					
		Yes		No		Total	
Age bracket		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
	20 years and below	21	8	3	1	24	4
	21-25 years	166	63	16	6	181	68
	26-30 years	17	6	2	1	19	7
	31 years and above	28	11	12	5	40	15
Total		233	88	33	12	265	100

Table 1: Access to the Internet

5.1.2. Services Sought from the Internet

A majority at 34% aged between 21-25 years indicated emails services as the most popular, followed by 21% who sought academic information and 6% looked for entertainment. The eldest respondents aged 31 and above at 9%, used the internet for emails. Those aged between 26-30 years and 20 years and below, indicated that the e-mail service was popular representing 5% each. Table 2 represents this finding.

		Age bracket								
		20 years and below		21-25 years		26-30 years		31 years and above		Total
What service do you look for from the internet?		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
	E-mail	12	5	90	34	12	5	24	9	138
	academic information	8	3	55	21	6	2	3	1	72
	News	0	0	9		1	1	2	1	12
	Entertainment	2	1	16	6	0	0	1	1	19
	Others	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	2
	No comment	2	1	10	4	0	0	10	4	22
Total		24	4	182	67	19	7	40	15	265

Table 2: Service Sought from the Internet

5.1.3. Facebook Registration

Most respondents, at 49% aged between 21-25 years were registered on Facebook, contrasting the 20% who were not. The registered 20 years and below, represented a 7% tabulation. Only 4% of those aged between 26-30 years were registered. Among the eldest respondents aged 31 years and above representing 10%, were unregistered. Table 3 represents this result.

		Are you registered on Facebook?					
		Yes		No		Total	
Age bracket		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
	20 years and below	18	7	6	2	24	4
	21-25 years	129	49	54	20	182	67
	26-30 years	11	4	8	3	19	7
	31 years and above	14	5	26	10	40	15
Total		173	65	94	35	266	100

Table 3: Facebook Registration

5.2. Individual Assessment of Facebook's Influence on the Cultural Orientation

5.2.1. Influence of Facebook

A majority at 60% felt Facebook did not alter their cultural orientations. 17% felt that Facebook altered peoples' cultural orientation thus viewed it more of a negative influence. However, 23% of the respondents were indifferent. Table 4 shows this finding.

Does Facebook have any influence on cultural orientation on its user?	Yes		No	
	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent
Negative influence	5	17	25	83
Positive influence	18	60	12	40
both positive and negative influence	7	23	23	77

Table 4: Influence of Facebook

5.2.2. Reasons for Facebook Membership

'Social networking' topped the list represented by a majority at 31% aged between 21-25 and a further proportion of 3%, aged 20 and below and 31 years and above (3%) and another 4% aged between 26-30. Entertainment and leisure were sought by 7% aged between 21-25 years. Whereas 5% cited information/news access and only 3% aged between 21-25 years stated it was for academic reasons. Table 5 shows this finding.

		Age bracket								
		20 years and below		21-25 years		26-30 years		31 years and above		Total
Why are you on Facebook?		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
	Social Networking	8	3	81	31	10	4	9	3	109
	Information/News access	5	2	14	5	1	1	2	1	22
	Entertainment/Leisure	5	2	18	7	0	0	1	1	24
	Academic	0	0	9	3	0	0	0	0	9
	No specific reasons	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
	No comment	6	2	60	23	8	3	26	10	100
Total		24	4	183	69	19	7	40	15	266

Table 5: Reasons for Facebook Membership

5.3. Impact of Social Networks as a Tool for Media globalization

5.3.1. Facebook Log-in Frequency

A majority at 24% aged between 21-25 years logged onto Facebook on a daily basis, followed by 16% who logged in twice a week. The respondents aged 20 and below comprising 6% logged in on a daily basis. Another 3% aged 31 and above logged into Facebook twice a week. A proportion of 2%, aged between 26-30 years indicated that they either logged onto Facebook on a daily basis or twice a week.

		Age bracket								
		20 yrs. and below		21-25 yrs.		26-30 Yrs.		31 Yrs. and above		Total
How often do you log onto Facebook?		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
	Everyday	15	6	65	24	4	2	2	1	87
	Twice a week	3	1	42	16	5	2	9	3	59
	After two weeks	0	0	13	5	2	1	1	1	16
	Once a month	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	1	3
	No comment	6	2	61	23	8	3	27	10	102
Total		24	4	183	69	19	7	40	15	266

Table 6: Facebook Log-in frequency

5.3.2. Introduction to Facebook

A majority at 38% aged between 21-25 years and 6% aged 20 years and below knew about Facebook from friends. Meanwhile, 6% aged between 21-25 years knew about Facebook from computer adverts. Only 2% aged between 21-25 years knew it via radio. A further 2% aged between 21-25 years knew it through television.

5.3.3. Recommending Facebook to Others

Respondents aged 21- 25 years constituting of 42%, respondents aged 20 years and below comprising 7% and those aged 31 years and above at 6% would recommend Facebook to others. However, 9% aged between 21-25 years would not recommend Facebook to others. Meanwhile, 18% aged between 21-25 years were ambivalent. Table 7 shows this finding.

		Would you recommend Facebook to others?						Total
		Yes		No		No comment		
Age bracket		N	%	N	%	N	%	N
	20 years and below	18	7	3	1	3	1	24
	21-25 years	112	42	23	9	48	18	183
	26-30 years	7	2	4	2	8	3	19
	31 years and above	15	6	13	5	12	5	40
Total		152	57	44	17	71	27	266

Table 7: Recommending Facebook to others

5.3.4. Time Spent on Facebook

The majority at 30% spent 30 minutes, while 23% one hour. Another 20% six hours and 10% took four hours. The minority at 3% took 3 hours on Face book, while those who took more time of twelve hours constituted 7%. Another 12% lamented about the cost despite availability. Table 8 represents this finding.

Time spent on Facebook	Frequency	Percent
30 Minutes	9	30
1 Hour	7	23
2 Hours	6	20
3 Hours	1	3
4 Hours	3	10
6 Hours	2	7
12 Hours	2	7
Total	30	100

Table 8: Time Spent on Facebook

5.3.5. Justification of time spent on Facebook

All the respondents at 100% indicated friends' interaction. Current affairs both locally and internationally were accessed by 23%. Another 20% claimed they were addicted. A proportion of 10% used it for professional networking. The minority at 7% used it for academic purposes or accessing news. Table 9 shows this finding.

Justification of time spent on Facebook	Yes		No	
	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent
Interacting with friends and making new friends (social networking)	30	100	0	0
Accessing current affairs both locally and internationally	7	23	23	77
Academic purposes	2	7	28	93
Accessing news	2	7	28	93
Addiction to Facebook	6	20	24	80
Affordable mode of communication	3	10	27	90
Professional networking	3	10	27	90

Table 9: Justification of Time Spent on Facebook

5.3.6. Strengths of Facebook

All the respondents at 100% acknowledged Facebook's network ability locally and internationally. Another 6% added the opportunity of information exchange. While 23% saw the entertainment value. A proportion of 13%, viewed it as a platform for cultural diversity or business opportunities. However, the minority at 3%, each, either had no specific reason for Facebook strength, or stated it motivated them to acquire basic computer skills for them to use for Facebook. Table 10 represents this finding.

Strengths of Facebook	Yes		No	
	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent
A social network locally and internationally	30	100	0	0
Platform for cultural diversity	4	13	26	87
Opportunity for information exchange	18	60	12	40
Educative forum	8	27	22	73
Strength in business dimension	4	13	24	87
Job advertisements	2	7	28	93
A high entertainment value	7	23	23	77
Interaction with media houses	2	7	28	93
Technology motivation (Computer skill acquisition as a result of Facebook)	1	3	29	97
Easy to use	2	7	28	93
No specific reason	1	3	29	97

Table 10: Strengths of Facebook

6. Conclusions

The study concluded that access to the internet was inevitable as evidenced by the majority at 88%, between 21-25 years who had access. The most popular services sought after were the e-mail, the search for academic information and entertainment. Other services included: blogging, inter personal networking, business tips, and interacting with other culture, sport highlights of various sites, scholarship application, spiritual matters and job adverts. Nonetheless, the study concludes that the internet is still an expensive venture as evidenced from the logging in time.

The internet has no significant effect on the cultural orientation of its users. Instead it is a major means of socializing and linking people all over the world. People are able to interact easily and frequently, while embracing diversity in culture, lifestyle and promoting global unity. Social networks are effective tools of mass media as derived from the percentage rate of registration on Facebook where most respondents, especially those aged between 21-25 years were members. Support for this conclusion is based on the transmission of knowledge of 'Facebook' as a communication component. Majority of the respondents knew about Facebook from friends and computer adverts. This conclusion is supported by the frequency percentage rate of Facebook members log in, which was very high and where most respondents logged in frequently and on a daily basis.

The study also affirmed that the internet is an effective tool for mass media from the approbation of subscribers. Facebook is acclaimed for its ability to network people of all ages both locally and internationally, creating opportunities for information exchange, high entertainment value, and also a platform for cultural diversity.

7. Recommendations

There is need to reinforce internet accessibility amongst all age brackets, due to the efficiency and effectiveness that it produces. Learning institutions should invest more on ICT and increase accessibility to internet.

Facebook being a good platform for cultural exchange, cultural events should continue to be organized through Facebook, as this will arrest the indigenous cultures through sharing and understanding the positives of global cultures. There should be increased literacy for the general public on the positive influence of social networks (Facebook) as a tool for mass media in the developing world, rather than concentrating on its negative influences.

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