

The Media of Nigerian Diaspora in Britain: A Study of Priorities and Preferences

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Abstract

This paper investigates the communication practices of Nigerian Diaspora members in Britain. It examines how they mitigate longing, and negotiate belonging in the distance. It studies their choices of media in communicating, and examines the factors that shape those choices over space and time. The paper notes that the decision on the media to use is shifty, as it is largely dependent on personal need, ever changing technologies of communication and the disparity in development between homeland and hostland, amongst other factors. Emerging in the circumstance is the fact of mitigation of distance through the use of the different media, both old and new, either in their individual variations, or from their point of convergence.

1.1: INTRODUCTION

International communications studies focus on the activities of states and corporations that essentially emanate from the centre. It is important to examine the process of determining the composition of mediation not between and within the metropolis, but partly between the metropolis and the marginal societies, while exploring the human experiences, interpersonal and community communication. Looking at Britain as a case allows us to explore the potentials of new technologies for economic and social development, and for groups with limited financial resources. In addition, for many diasporic and migrant groups, Online Media is the only medium that connects them to news and current affairs in the *homeland*, as there is probably a limited and costly access to other media, such as television, radio, and the press. Besides, Online Media enables real time interaction, networking, storage, sharing and retrieving of data. But how are channels of media use determined?

In doing this research, cognizance is taken of the high convergence that characterizes present day media variants. Some smartphones, for instance, can at once play the role of the telephone, that of the television, the radio, the press, the micro-recorder, the music player, just like the Television and the Internet can independently do. The lines between the networks are thin, as their functions are interwoven and sometimes undistinguishable. This research, conducted at a much earlier date, as part of a bigger study on Nigerian Diaspora use of the Internet, and the possibility of mediating longing, and fostering belonging, is updated to fill obvious gaps in the contextualization of preferred media of Nigerian Diaspora members in Britain. As a result, analyses essentially evaluate the media in their different contexts, irrespective of their overlapping, and/or convergent character.

1.1.1: METHODOLOGY

In doing this research, survey and interviews were used. Survey was carried out on a selected sample between London and Leeds. There was however a heavier reliance on interviews, between the two cities of Nigerian Diaspora members, through a random sample of respondents. Evaluation of data was done based on inferences from the two methods, which hopefully enriched submissions and arguments.

2.1: THE SHAPING OF PERSONAL CONNECTION WITH *HOMELAND*: ONLINE MEDIA, THE MOBILE PHONE, OR THE OTHERS?

The combination of ease, accessibility, and cost are essential when personal connection between Nigeria and the host country is in focus. Some respondents like Emeka and Esther below note that Online Media is not a convenient medium to relate with their parents in Nigeria. Absence of enabling infrastructures for Online Media use, illiteracy and age are some reasons they mentioned. Some others like Akinmade also hints at this, particularly as Online Media does not guarantee intimacy.

The regular/routine roles of preceding media like the telephone are possible online, through sending and receiving e-mails; e-mail attachments; chats and Voice over Online Media Protocol (VoIP), but the regular need to get detailed information is obvious from the viewpoint of participants, like Dupe, 43. This detailed information is not easily accessible on the phone. They are of the type from parties in Nigerian, who have impersonal relationships with migrants. Others probably simultaneously seek the information, instead of the one-on-one track of the telephone. The information is usually loaded online by website owners who desire to reach many, other than participants.

I cannot say that many Nigerians back home, (use Online Media) especially those I could have used it with. The economic differences between the UK where I live and Nigeria matters a lot... Of course, I cannot talk to my mother on Online Media. **Emeka, Male, 46, London.**

Though we are connected to AOL broadband, we seldom use e-mail for reaching home. We may use it to reach friends and families in places where we go for holiday, maybe to send photographs, share ideas and forwarded messages, but not really to discuss matters that are more intimate. **Akinmade, Male, 48, London.**

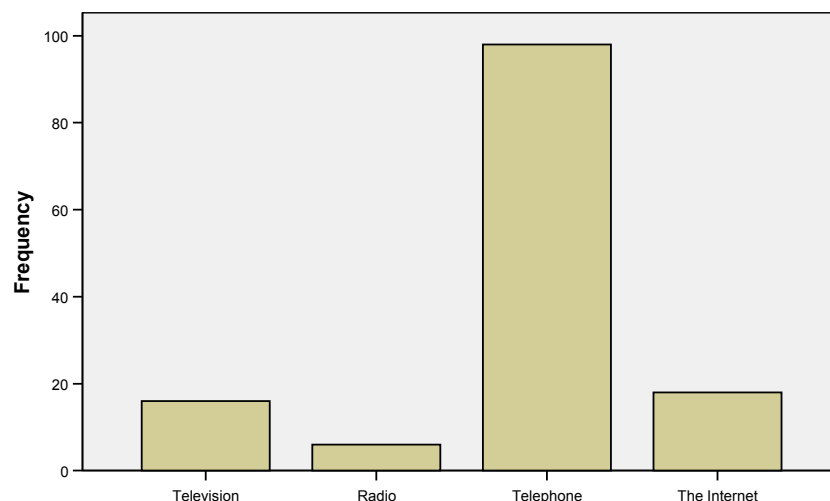
I am regularly online with relations and my fiancé who is happy to be able to join me here any moment from now. We chat online, through the text and telephone, while he sends cards to me online as well. For my old parents back in the village, I ring them occasionally. Of course, they are not computer literate, and I cannot expect them to start learning computing at their ages. Therefore, it is convenient for me to talk to them on the telephone. **Esther, Female, 44, London.**

Most respondents testify to preferring telephone to reaching loved ones. This is either on a daily basis or once every two to three days, or weekly. Greater convenience and accessibility are some of the advantages of the medium over Online Media. As in previous points, the convergent character of Online Media includes the telephone, with facilities like Skype, SIP, IAX, and H.323, as Voice over Online Media Protocols (VoIP). Though available, these newer devices remain relatively more sophisticated for use than the mobile phone or landline. These subsequently give an accessibility advantage on the non-Online Media based phones. The minimum variant of the phone that can be in their possession at any time is the mobile. Sheriff, (34, Leeds.) notes this:

The mobile phone was the first thing I bought when I arrived the UK. At that time, the GSM was not yet in Nigeria. Therefore, it was thrilling to have it in the UK at low cost. Those concerned about my well-being, particularly my Dad, easily reached me. I was not computer literate then, so I was not attracted to Online Media. With the mobile, prospective employers reached me, and I called them too. That was how I got my first job. It was later that I began using Online Media and now, I am an addict.

International calling cards make long distance phone calls much more affordable. Landlines are also available, while the cards reduce the cost. The mobile phone is always with the owner, while the landline is readily available at home, or on the streets. However, Online Media terminal may not be readily available in comparative terms. It is always *detached*. It may indeed be possible to send and receive e-mails on the mobile, but it requires more time and concentration than simply dialling. Will it therefore be suitable at the time of need? It again brings up the convenience and accessibility component, which many participants easily associate more with the telephone, as Jide, 29 says.

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Observations and interviews like Sheriff's statement above show that the mobile phone is a priceless medium for many migrants. Access is not a serious issue in the determination of use. In Nigeria as well, it is very popular with the introduction of the Global System of Mobile telecommunication (GSM) in 2001. Contacts on the network from both ends are easier in most places and at most times. The likely illiterate village dwellers that

Emeka and Esther talk about above, who are not able to interact with the computer, can engage with the phones. In addition, literacy hardly counts here, simply as the ability to read or write in English language-the main Online Media language. Migrants may use native languages in telephone conversations. The urban non-elite who is yet to embrace Online Media, and who is yet to have an e-mail account, can also hear or speak English. And just in case s/he cannot hear or speak, an interpreter can be engaged. These processes are less burdensome than reaching a computer terminal, which is dependent on an erratic power supply; an unaffordable computer system; a costly server; expensive or poorly managed cafés; and very slow and possibly outdated computer system. Okome earlier mentioned some of these. These show why the telephone may be the most useful most useful, non-*detached* medium in relating with Nigeria, as in the figure below, where many respondents regard the telephone as the most important when communicating with the *homeland*.

The statement of a participant below is also indicative. The prevalent use of the telephone when contacting people in Nigeria is emphasised. It is a reminder that Online Media is not the only effective medium. The voice advantage of the telephone, as against e-mails, is probably an additional encouragement, as it stimulates recollection of the likely familiar voice of the distant receiver. Perhaps, emotions are roused through it, just as it may minimise longing.

We are regularly in touch with home, through telephone calls, using international call cards or discounted numbers. The telephone work well in this (talking to people in migration source) regard. **Akinmade, Male, 48, London.**

The statement that follows values Online Media but gives credit to the telephone for being another speedy medium. Immediacy features with the phone as it can be more flexible, as against Online Media, which requires a connected computer, a more suitable environment, and a lot more concentration. Even if Online Media can be mobile, it is not as much as the mobile phone. The reason being the less portability of relevant appliances and access problems in Nigeria, which is relatively not the case in the hostland:

Though, Online Media is fast, telephone is faster. You only have to click some buttons and you are through, but with e-mail, you have to sit by the computer, type in and send. You know what I mean. Telephone conversations can be on the go, but e-mail is a bit cumbersome. **Jide, Male, 29, Leeds.**

The next participants' contribution is identical to the two above in terms of the primacy of the phone, but departs from them with the element of keeping record. While the written word of Online Media can most times be stored and retrieved, (informal) telephone conversations are often not on record. Even so, the relative speed in the dissemination of voiced information is vital in his consideration, which influences his preference for the phone:

I keep in touch with home mainly through the telephone. Sometimes, I write. I write because people sometimes like to keep records. So I send post cards and such other things. I use Online Media also. I send e-mails to some of my friends. However, for my parents and uncles, who are not educated, I communicate with them through the telephone. The telephone is more important to me because it is faster, and it conveys messages as quickly as possible. **Mohammed, Male, 27, Leeds.**

The next participant finds a balance between the two media, but gives an edge to the phone given the access and educational disadvantages of Nigeria-conditions that could guarantee widespread use:

It is not everybody that you communicate with through Online Media, because of the educational level of our people. At least with my wife and with some of my friends, I do. With people in the village or may be in my local government where there is GSM, you have to use telephone. If we have Online Media facility in my village, it will be cheaper and faster; you can write whatever you want to write and you do not have to pay as much as you pay when using the telephone, or the phone card. I have to use the telephone now, because there is no Online Media connection where my parents are. **Magaji, Male, 36, Leeds.**

On frequency, the majority of the respondents say they use the telephone at least once a week to call Nigeria, which further shows a high engagement with the medium. A little less use it every two to three days, and a fewer number than the second group use it on a daily basis, as seen in the table below. The table shows the frequency of telephone use to connecting with Nigeria. The question asks, Do you telephone Nigeria (on), a (a) daily basis (b) every two to three days (c) every week (d) every month (e) less often (f) not at all (and) (g) others (please specify). The responses show that those who do so at least once a week are the majority with 34.7 %, and then followed by two to three day contact basis with 25.3%, and on a daily basis 12.7 %. The remaining options are, altogether, less than 18%.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Daily basis?	19	12.7	14.1	14.1
	Every two to three days?	38	25.3	28.1	42.2
	Every week?	52	34.7	38.5	80.7
	Every month?	3	2.0	2.2	83.0
	Less often?	13	8.7	9.6	92.6
	Not at all?	6	4.0	4.4	97.0
	Other (Please specify)	4	2.7	3.0	100.0
	Total	135	90.0	100.0	
Missing	System	15	10.0		
	Total	150	100.0		

Frequency of Telephone Use in Relating With Nigeria

There is the probability of limiting conversation time on telephone due to cost considerations. It often makes participants to go the distance to complement its regular use with Online Media. Mobile phone Online Media users or owners of wireless enabled laptop computers, among the participants could be relatively non-detached. However, because Online Media use on the mobile needs attention, just as a position of settlement is required to use the laptop, adds to the fact of detachment. It is not the case with the telephone, which is always available to them for a flexible and faster use.

While Online Media is able to update the migrants about details of occurrences in Nigeria, the telephone plays the routine, regular and personal communication roles. This takes place through, for instance, saying a quick “hello...” to a loved one in Nigeria, with the additional advantage of voice communication in consideration, as observations confirm. The convenience, for participants, of getting everyday routine information about someone’s well-being; whether or not remitted funds have been received, or a new need for it; marriage or divorce plans; children’s wellbeing; return plans, or its absence; job situations and conditions; and other general talk on the telephone is unmistakable.

And this is not Online Media based telephone or the Voice over Online Media Protocol (VoIP), but mainly on the mobile or landline, with one of the many international call cards in hand. However, when the matter is about details on the politics of origin, migrants turn to the websites of Nigerian newspapers and magazines or the many developing news-inclined portals. The websites also help in providing information about the state of the economy; about the security situation; about celebrities and their world; and about the many evolving new rich, and the declining rich. Other than the telephone, television also matter in the migrants bid to mediate distance. I shall turn to this next.

3.1: AUDIO-VISUAL IMPACT OF TELEVISION

The roles of television and cinema in the expansion of migrants’ imagination are important. This is because Nigeria Television programmes emotionally close the distance between origin and present locations, when it produces images, as participants say. The images may not simply remind the migrant viewer of the departed ways of life, but updates them about new trends. They (the images) prompt recollections, enliven remembrances, just as they elicit memories. When it becomes a regular act, the *homeland* ceases to be in the distant. Many networks have lately become available for the consumption of interested the Nigerian diaspora members.

References to these networks in online spaces of interaction and revelations in returned questionnaires reveal the significance of such TV stations. The websites of the networks lay claim to making the migrants a target. These sites are alternative access points for the migrant consumers, as opposed to viewing them from the screens of “real” TV sets. Among these TV stations are Bright Entertainment Network (BEN Television); African Independent Television (AIT); Nigeria Television Authority (NTA); Kingsway International Christian Centre Television (KICC Television) and Channel 331 on Sky, which is devoted to the production of *Nollywood* films. I shall now discuss these sampled networks as a means of understanding the mediation effect of the television on the migrant audience.

A Nigerian migrant Alistair Soyode established the most popular television stations amongst the migrants in the UK, BEN TV in 2002. Its target audience are black people. These groups, according to BEN TV, hardly receive reports in the mainstream media of the hostland. In their plans, BEN TV was an outlet of expression for this minority. Though the slant is frequently commercial, the originators are championing the cause of giving voice to an assumed voiceless. This voice, though significant, is different from Online Media voice.

While one person, a few people, or a group, may establish the TV voice, Online Media voice can be more flexible. Even so, the advantage of satellite broadcasting to migrant communities is not lost in the process of globalisation. The owners note further that they are out to help the process of self-empowerment and self-actualisation. They promise to help migrant viewers realise their objectives in the hostland through the airing of appropriate stories, and through information exchange (Accessed at www.bentelevision.com).

Its programmes centre on news, evangelism, and the production of music, videos, sports, personality interviews, and interactive sessions. One of its programmes, “*In Diaspora*”, appears 8.00pm every Tuesday. As named, it aims to reflect the absent status of its targeted consumers. As once observed, the subject of discussion by its anchor, Jide Iyaniwura, relates to migration, resettlement and host people’s perception of the migrants. The degree to which the migrants can modify, challenge or change this perception was of interest to viewers who phoned to contribute. “*In Diaspora*” projects the mood of phone-in participants in the hostland on a chosen topic. Invited guests in the studio review issues from a probably more informed perspective. The station specifically describes itself as the:

24-hour black-oriented television service in United Kingdom, (BEN Television is) bridging and filling the gap created by mainstream broadcasters. The television introduces new cultured, black oriented programmes to European taste with good family ethos. Ben television is a Black oriented, urban, diverse and cosmopolitan family channel, established to provide a wholesome mix of entertaining programmes suitable for family viewing. It also includes a range of cultured programming to empower, transform and challenge the conventional perception of Africa and Africans. Accessed at <http://www.bentelevision.com/2007/home/introduction.php>

The channel’s interests in airing programmes that are “black oriented”, but tailored to “European taste” suggests that a new element in transnational communication is coming because the programmes are no longer going to be entirely African; neither are they going to be reproducing white, liberal Eurocentrism. They are black oriented television series suitable to the European environment, and acceptable to its migrant audience. Through a consumption of BEN TV programmes, therefore, the migrant may acquire a new worldview; one that is not entirely African.

Robins and Aksoy (2005:14), call this experience “transnational disposition”, as their study of Turkish migrants in the UK revealed. It may as well be a disposition as it relates to Nigerian migrants, but the process rather turns them into consumers of a modified culture. The culture undergoes modification, as it is new, in between, and sometimes shifting between cultural locations and ideological points of reference. The channel’s claim to be airing programmes that could “empower, transform and challenge the conventional perception of African and Africans” is also important.

While this is possible through educating viewers, it may be limited by the stations’ capacities and to their viewers’ expectations. This is so because not all migrants subscribe to Sky, even if the channel is a “free to air”, meant for “blacks in Diaspora” (accessed at <http://www.bentelevision.com/2007/home/introduction.php>). Again, they are unlikely to compete with the developed networks of leading mainstream media, where misrepresentations allegedly take place. This argument does not however erase the significance of such a project that offers alternative representations of Africans and black people, compared to the mainstream media.

The Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) like most transnational television stations had until recently been concerned only with audiences within the country’s national territory. The station yielded in late 2006 to the pull of changes in global satellite broadcasting, by reaching out to foreign audiences, most probably Nigerians in the diaspora. It is available online via AFRICAST (Accessed at www.africast.tv on 16/03/2008), and through BEN TV at 8.00 p.m. (This however varies in accordance with time changes between the two countries). MHZ Networks provide it in the US.

Importantly, the programmes they show are the popular “Network News”, which is a comprehensive daily report of key events in Nigeria. However, stories are official and have a government leaning. Through updating migrants about origin, a periodic connection with Nigeria manifests. Physical presence is likely taking place in the hostland, but thoughts of country of origin goes on through the hour that the broadcast lasts, or through the time that the viewer engages with the screen. “Transcultural dispositions” (Robins and Aksoy, 2005:14), may result when the act becomes routine.

Because of the mindset that develops via the everyday practice of consuming NTA productions, other kinds “of mental and imaginative spaces”, could evolve eventually helping to form a “capacity to function and think across cultural domains” (Robins and Aksoy, *ibid.*: 15). A US viewer, Dr Femi Ajayi comments on the NTA transnational production as follows:

I am welcoming the NTA to Atlanta, Georgia. Thanks to NTA international for bringing this live broadcast to the corridors of CNN, telling Nigeria story as it has never been told before. Something good is coming from Africa. Here is NTA international, the first and the largest television station in Africa, broadcasting LIVE to the world, from Atlanta. What other stories do we have to write about Nigeria, more than this live broadcast on the Economic opportunities in Nigeria that have not being told by any other before? Ajayi, accessed at <http://nigeriaworld.com/columnist/ajayi/081407.html>

The excerpt above is celebratory. It is a reminder of the core philosophy behind the creation of

minority media, which is to challenge exclusion. In this specific case, the writer envisages a direct challenge to CNN, as the reference to the “corridors of CNN” implies. However, can this challenge be effective? The question arises because the capital outlay of NTA transnational network is no match to that of the transnational worth of the US based CNN.

From the mindset of the writer, it does not have to be. Satisfaction comes from the ability of the network to tell “The Nigeria story as it has never being told before”. They could possibly have been half-truths, negative or incomplete. The new voice from Nigeria sounds like a long muted one. The release of the voice is therefore a welcome to freedom in the distance, one that is particularly educative on the available opportunities in origin, if return ever takes place. In an opinion article in Nigeria’s *The Guardian*, Owogbemi Modupe writes:

If one of the motive of the NTA is to be responsive to negative Western reports through a basic rendition of news, then success would hardly be registered. The projection of Nigeria’s heritage, in ways that are germane to explaining the dynamics of the period seem more sensible. The Brazilian example is a witness. Modupe, accessed at www.ngrguardiannews.com

His argument was that rather than being defensive about so-called negative reports, the network could concentrate on positive things that may be attractive to the mainstream international media. Viewers note TV *Globo*, for instance, for its efforts in projecting the Brazilian culture to migrant Brazilians, and other countries within the range of its signal. *Aljazeera* (Arabic and English) is not essentially defensive in its reflection of Islamic civilisation, which the Western media allegedly misunderstands. Both TV *Globo* and *Aljazeera* (Arabic and English) have turned out to be important transnational television stations from the “south”. They are epitomes of contra-flows (Thussu, 2007), while *Aljazeera* (English) has grown to become one of the “big three” (Chalaby, 2007). The other two are CNN and the BBC. Does the NTA reveal any sign of being a consequential challenge after nearly two years of transnational broadcasting? The question may not be fair, given the crisis of development the owner nation-state still faces. Nevertheless, the ambitious posturing could lead to the query after this period of transnational activity. As its programmes and workforce are still largely Nigerian, its limitations are therefore apparent. It is nevertheless a significant medium of information for the Nigerian diaspora in the light of its ability to offer a larger space for connection.

African Independent Television (AIT) is a private initiative led by a Nigerian, Dr Raymond Dokpesi, to compete with the state owned NTA. Watched through Globe Cast World TV in the US and Canada, and through BEN TV in the UK (accessed at www.aity.com on 17/03/2008), its reputation for offering unofficial perspectives to news and current affairs is evident. It also broadcasts *Nollywood* products to viewers, just as it airs interactive sessions, through its popular early morning show, “*Kakaki*”. Though quality of production is suspect, it offers alternatives for migrant consumers.

Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC) Television performs a similar role. Led by the Nigerian born Pastor Mathew Ashimolowo, the twenty-four hour television station, viewed through Sky Channel 774, specialises in the broadcasting of Church programmes, church conference proceedings and messages to viewers, such as women, businesspersons, youths, couples and singles. Apart from the lead pastor, the wife, Yemisi, is also a regular on screen. So are some preachers from America, Nigeria and elsewhere.

Other than reaching those who do not attend their church services in London, and who may be living in a different place, the channel claims to be determined to “make champions”, and to make people “the best”. The programmes on air are similar to those on church television broadcasts in Nigeria. Classy aesthetics, an upbeat ambition, and an obvious panache symbolise the programmes. Other than the style of the church head, his Western exposure spanning over two decades may have contributed. To some viewers, the achievement of the church is a pride of blacks, and more particularly Nigerian migrants. To others, Pentecostal priests are businesspersons, who soon after establishing their churches become rich. The statements below represent these strands of thoughts:

Pastor Ashimolowo is particularly blessed. He has brought a revival to many lost souls. The KICC station is a constant attraction to me. I like to hear the word. It is what I need to grow in the lord. The pastor and the wife know the word. I have been blessed many times, particularly at nights after work. Lovett, Female, 33, Leeds.

I like to listen to Nigerian news sometimes. However, I have to be concerned about when I switch to these Nigerian TV stations, so as not to be bombarded with the theatrics of the many modern day preachers always on there. They are obviously always preaching to the wrong people. I do not need to hear them to get what I want in this country-all I need is to work for pounds, not to listen to somebody asking for ten per cent of my earnings! Demilade, Male, 39, London.

To Lovett, the channel is appropriate for her spiritual needs. She feels a need to achieve a spiritual maturity and finds the station helpful. Many of these religious programmes are present in Nigeria. The reality is

different in the hostland, as they are arguably less overtly religious. KICC TV therefore fills a spiritual void in migration. The overall impact of this is perhaps ambiguous, because belief systems are personal, but associating with the messages of the broadcasters makes her feel a sense of ontological security.

Imagining co-viewers could also formulate a sense of belonging. Demilade however feels different. His mission in the hostland is economic. “I came here with a work permit, not a church permit”, he boldly adds. He would therefore avoid distractions that could lead to a reduction of his resources on the grounds of satisfying a vague spiritual need. As it is, the migrants’ perceptions of the religious channels are different. Nevertheless, the significance of the channel in contributing to migrants’ paths to spiritual uplifts is clear.

Equally important is the representation of Nigerian images and cultures to migrants through *Nollywood* movies. Rated by *Time* Magazine as third in the world, after Hollywood and Bollywood, and “being worth over 22 billion dollars”, (Accessed at www.naijarules.com), the movies’ impact on migrants’ perceptions is considerable. Video cassettes, Audiotapes, VCD’s, CD’s and DVD’s are sold in local Nigerian food shops. They are available for rent in these outlets, for a fee or are free in some circumstances. Viewing them may take place on different websites, again for a fee or for free, especially during a specified period of promotion. SKY Channel 331 now exclusively shows *Nollywood* films.

The promoters are accessible at www.nollywoodmovies.tv., for subscription details. They began in January 2008. A subscription of £5.99 applies. The charges effectively started 29/02/2008 after a two-month free trial period. Plots are often around love, riches, witchcraft, politics, religion and cultural practices (Azeez, 2008). Production quality may still be relatively substandard, but they appeal to migrants for many reasons. The participant below sums it up:

I watch *Nollywood* films when I am less busy. Particularly during Bank Holidays, if I am not doing overtime. I like to hear them because actors speak like me. Their pronunciations are clearer to me than Western films. Neither do I have to bother about reading English interpretations, if they were for instance, Indian. I also do laugh at some of the ways of our rich men as portrayed in the films. Though the storylines are most times predictable, I appreciate them for reminding me of home. Maja, Male, 43, London.

The statement is revealing in two ways. First, it shows how familiarity and association with actors gives viewers a sense of comfort. Second, is the issue of accent when he says, “actors speaking like me”. Connection with Nigeria takes place not only in the plot but also in the speeches of actors. This indicates an ability to relate better with them in communication terms than with Western actors. Watching the movies may therefore be less strenuous to his ears than non-Nigerian films. In the case of “other” films, he probably has to listen more attentively; watch the speakers’ lips; or even rewind to keep proper track of the story line.

There is therefore evidence of relief in his engagement with the movies. In addition, this relief heightens when he laughs. The amusement at the ways of the Nigerian rich in the film is probably a product of knowledge of the different ways of the rich in the hostland. While the former is believably flamboyant, the rich in the presently lived place is perhaps conservative. The exposure to different cultures increases the ability to differentiate. Reminding him of origin is an apparent benefit, but it goes further to demonstrate the power of the moving image, and their storylines on memories. The next participant introduces a generational dimension. She states:

I watch the films a lot, particularly since I have been on maternity leave. My first son, who has never been to Nigeria, also finds them interesting. The little meaning he makes out of them tells him about home. He is beginning to develop a picture of what Nigeria looks like, through the films. Though my husband does not like them because he says they are easy to predict, but many are not. They keep you in suspense until you get to the end. Iyabo, Female, 33, Leeds.

According to this participant, the films help with long distance socialisation. The child, a nine year old, was obviously born abroad. He has never experienced the Nigerian environment, neither has he imbibed its ways in the manner in which the “home” born would. It is probably a worrisome issue for the mother. She is happy that the child’s interest in the movies teaches him a few things about Nigeria. Besides, the films instruct the child about another culture, where the parents originated. He is learning that the inhabited place is not his.

He is of another and a “double vision” (Bhabha, 1990), is developing. This may diminish the idealisation of parental origin, as images of the origin are regularly featured on screen. Absolute strangeness may not emerge in the face of a visit home, or in the usually difficult case of return. The exposure of the child to the films is helpful to the mother, to the extent in which socialisation at a distance can be virtually affected. This is because images and words are fragments of the imagination. The imagination can be an expansion or a contraction, depending on the skills, creativity and experiences of the producers and actors.

It is also dependent on the extent of the child’s exposure to a host society’s ways. If the exposure were extensive, less meaning would come out of the films. Moreover, if not, more meanings could come of it. In this

situation, what becomes overriding is the fact of the recognition of another culture, where a relationship occurs. It also confirms what one of the industry's analyst, Dr Akin Adesokan, means by noting that:

Nollywood is alive and well. The growth has only accelerated due to the phenomenal changes in the technology of filmmaking, the fact that there are many more Nigerians and other Africans living outside the continent than in, say, 1985. Accessed at www.indiana.edu/~6fca/events/akininterview.html

4.1: ROLES OF RADIO, PRESS, POSTAL SERVICES AND “WORD OF MOUTH”

Other than Online Media, telephone and television, other media play significant roles in the mediation of migrants multiple relationships. These are radio, press, postal services and word of mouth. Reliance on the radio may not be as obvious, it helps remembrances, and fosters communal feelings when migrant groups come together to run programmes in native languages. There are broadcasts in the Yoruba language on a few migrant related radio stations. BEN TV station and the moribund *Radio Kudirat* own some of these. *Radio Kudirat* was particularly prominent in the fight against military dictatorship in the 1990's.

Led by Nobel Prize winner, Wole Soyinka, it sensitised migrants to the ills of the ancestral home from an activist perspective, through negative reports about then military dictators. Its propaganda campaign was unsettling to the then Nigerian military dictators. The station provoked a crisis of confidence between the military leaders and some foreign governments in support of the campaigners. Some of these governments were those of the UK, and Canada.

The station did not however outlive the fall of the military regime that led to its introduction; it went off air in 1998. Its exploits and those of others presently on air are a reflection of the migrant capacity to take risks in communication. The awareness they created and are still creating, is not only complementary to other media, but demonstrates the migrants' desire to explore the mediation potential inherent in respective media of international communications, whenever the need arises.

Many migrant magazines and newspapers exist. A lot are short lived. Notable ones in Nigerian and in minority stores are *Ovation International*, *Positive*, *Focus Magazine*, *Nigerians and Africans Abroad*, and *Highlife*. *African Today* published for a while, before it stopped, just as *Chic Magazine* did. There are several newsletters as well. Many have online versions. They focus mainly on reporting migrant activities, like birthdays, deaths, graduation parties, immigration issues, burials, scandals, fashion, jobs, weddings, local eateries, accommodation issues, business opportunities, romance, memorable day celebrations, and visits of Nigerian officials.

They are mainly weeklies, monthlies, quarterlies, and periodicals. Cost and inconvenience, given the possible difficulties in running a business in a foreign country may determine publishing schedules. Essentially, their area of concern is the mediation of migrant activities. Newspapers and magazines from Nigeria complement their efforts in migration. The physical editions of publications from origin are hardly timely, because of the difficulty in circulating them at a distance. Regardless of this limitation in circulation capabilities, many migrants are happy to read them when possible.

Apart from posting letters, and documents, through the public and private postal services, “word of mouth” is also important. Migrants easily know who is travelling and who is not from their networks. They share rumours, and leads to stories. Through travellers, they send letters, cash and deliver unwritten messages to friends and families in origin. It does not really matter if the messages go through several parties, as the case could be. Of importance to them is its eventual delivery. Replies often come through the bearers, particularly in cases where visits are brief. It all highlights the relevance of other method.

5.1 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Online Media is frequently celebrated for its convergence, which implies its ability to combine the functions of television, telephone, radio, print and post. This capacity may though be unique; it has not however discouraged the independent use of these media, whose functions Online Media has aggregated. Rather, many of these media, like the television are also growing, through the rising influence of satellite broadcasting; and telephone, through the increasing sophistication of mobile telephony. This therefore invites us to continuously examine its significance as a convergent technology.

The need for a regular examination is also important because even when its many to many quality is highlighted, the attribute is not exactly unique to it. Other technologies, like television, (especially digital services), and the telephone, (particularly the mobile variation) are also becoming convergent. Would technologies of communication eventually become less individualistic through convergence; or shall we have a “convergence of convergence”? The interpretation of Online Media convergence therefore requires frequent examinations, even as the growth of the technology continues.

Then there is the question of a multicultural society. As people in dispersion, the Nigerian diaspora represent a specific ethnic group in a host society. In a place like Britain, the migrants are players in the

construction of a community of multi-cultures, as expressed online, and offline. Against this background, they bear a culture with Nigeria as its foundation. They share this in distant places of settlement. The sharing and understanding of cultures in multicultural settings can be important for cultural and public diplomacy (Taylor, 1997), which the Nigerian groups, states or governments may use as experiences of living with diversity.

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