Chapter 11

Global Media, Television, and the Americanization of Young Africans

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examined the perception of young Africans on American values as portrayed in popular entertainment programs. This chapter examined the use of DSTV as a study example because it is the most popular digital-pay TV with the highest subscription in Africa. Furthermore, the objectives are: (1) To ascertain the major type of western programmes preferred on DSTV among young Africans, (2) To examine the perception of young Africans on whether these TV channels influence the adoption of western values. This research adopted the use of the survey method to achieve the objectives of the study. A value contribution of this chapter is that global television has created multiple media products that have unique elements of American culture, which will distort African values. Also, the influence of American values will have a snowball effect on African youths in different spheres of life.

INTRODUCTION

Media experts suggest that the influence of the media on our social realities correlates with the extent of our dependence on the media for information (Okorie & Bwala, 2016; Lee, 2017; Okorie & Salawu, 2017; Okorie & Bwala, 2017; Oduaran & Okorie, 2018). Lippmann (1934) as cited in Odukomaiya (1992) explained how we form “the pictures in our heads”. Since people cannot possibly experience most events...
of the real world first-hand, they derive their knowledge of the world through a “window” provided by the media, even though what people see through this media window is not the actual reality of life but a pseudo-reality.

In the same vein, media viewing have been ascertained to be largely inculcated into our systems, that we do not even realize how much effect it has on an individual’s life; from a young schoolboy who is eager to skip school, just to watch cartoons, to a young teenager who craves after the latest musical videos, movies, and idolizes celebrities and other larger-than-life images exposed to on the television. Television has been observed to be one major way of driving information into our systems, whether good or bad, because of the sound coupled with sight advantage it possesses over other media, hence the saying; “Seeing is believing.”

Interestingly, the proliferation of cable and digital television stations in Africa have further increased media viewing among young people. Importantly, Western-American content dominates most of the cable and digital television stations. Okorie (2010) citing Bagdikan (2000) observed that “By 1984, 50 corporations had established a controlling interest of diverse media in the United States. By 1987, the number of firms having the controlling interest was reduced to twenty-six. By 1990, it fell to twenty-three and by 1996; the number was closer to ten. This acceleration pace of global media system is now dominated by nine giant firms. The five largest are Time Warner ($24 billion), Disney ($22 billion), Bertelsmann ($15 billion), Viacom ($13 billion), and Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation ($11 billion). While, Viacom, Disney and AOL Time Warner are U.S owned, many non-U.S. owned companies dominate the roster of the largest media groups: News Corporation (Australia), Bertelsmann (Germany), Reed-Elsavier (Britain/Netherlands), Vivendi and Lagadere-Hachette(France) and Sony Corporation (Japan)”. Besides needing global scope to compete, the rules of thumb for global media giants are twofold: First, to get bigger so as to dominate markets and your competition can’t buy such firms out. Firms like Disney and Time Warner have almost tripled in size this decade. Secondly, they have interests in numerous media industries, such as film production, book publishing, music, TV channels and networks, retail stores, amusement parks, magazines, newspapers and the likes.

Scholars, Amosu, 2016; Okorie & Salawu, 2016; Usaini & Ekeanyanwu, 2017; Lee, (2017) agree that these TV products have cultural values that have been embedded in their programmes; a teenager would gladly tune to MTV to catch-up with the latest hit songs; Fox and BET channels to see the recent blockbuster movies and E! TV to watch celebrities shows..

Against this background, this chapter examined the perception of young Africans on American values as portrayed in popular entertainment programs from the United States. This chapter examined the use of DSTV as a study example because it is the most popular digital-pay TV with the highest subscription in Africa, using Nigeria

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