



Vol. 1, No. 1 | December 2018

---

## Editor's Note

---

Oluyinka Esan

Reader, School of Media and Film, University of Winchester, UK.

### Who we are?

Communication Cultures in Africa (CCA) is the journal from the Association of Communication Scholars and Professionals of Nigeria, published by the Winchester University Press. It is set to address, in one space, a wide range of themes from different sectors in the field of media and communication, in recognition of the interconnectedness of much of these topics. This approach is particularly relevant in African contexts, given the social and developmental challenges being addressed.

The journal accepts contributions from a range of academic disciplines which inform the media and communication field of study. Many of these interests now subsist as specialist areas, as expressed in more established journals (such as those that focus on Cultural Studies, Linguistics, History, and Political Communication), and even within the Media and Communication field of study, specific areas have evolved as full-fledged disciplines. Specialised areas in which media have been applied are exemplified by long standing work on Health Communication, with specific attention to Reproductive Health, HIV/AIDS, and Malaria, by scholarship in Communication for Development and Population Studies. Other distinct areas of academic study, like Identity and Diversity, and Peace and Conflict Prevention, have evolved relatively recently, reflecting persisting societal challenges. Because the African context shows vividly that these lanes of interests are bound to cross, there is wisdom in having all concerns in one stable. Having interested parties from diverse backgrounds keeping

© 2018 Communication Cultures in Africa

DOI:

up to date with different ideas relevant to their causes, under one cover, should make their contemplations more robust.

## **Attaining aspirations**

Our journal joins the long list of titles in the sector, but carves an important niche for itself. Given the roots and long history of media in western societies, it is understandable that scholarship in our sector has been Eurocentric, both in terms of the proximity to the locations from which journals are published, and the contexts of study which gain the attention of these journals. While the latter is more difficult to substantiate without a systematic inventory of the papers published in specific journals, the former, which arguably serves as an indicator of participation, is readily documented. A quick analysis of the titles listed under Communication in the Scimago Journal Ranking confirms this. Of the 427 publications (journals, trade journals, conference reports and book series) listed for 2017, almost half (48 per cent) were from the Western Europe region while North America accounted for 42 per cent. None were from Africa, even though one of the UK based titles had a focus for Africa. This global output pattern fails to do justice to the volume of work that occurs in the area under consideration.

Communication cultures in Africa deserve attention. The diversity that characterises African societies enriches and complicates lived experiences, justifying these cultures for practical, critical and scholarly attention. Much work has been done and is being done on communication and cultures in Africa. It is most encouraging that African scholars are speaking to each other in scholarly circles - conferences, seminars, round table events. These rich ideas need to be heard. Many of these are published in books and journals, and are only available as far as the restricted physical circulation permits. Only a fraction of contributions that should come from the African continent can be found in journals easily accessible to continental and global audiences. Thus, it becomes necessary for concerted action to bring to the fore the overlooked continent, through an open access journal.

## **What to expect going forward:**

### **Examine traditional concerns**

Attention to power has always been in focus in media practice and scholarship, typically in relation to concerns about the establishment of a democratic culture (Carpentier, 2011), but also with regard to representations in the news, power relations, and determination of in-groups and outgroups (Maia, 2014). This trend justifies the inclusion of journalism and political communication within our frame of interests. Universal struggles for press freedom; to make the powerful accountable;

to find appropriate funding models that will guarantee professionalism in media establishments; to ensure that media organisations remain relevant in the face of new platforms of delivery; to appraise new participants and modes of participation in the news making process, and other emerging media cultures are glaring in the African context, perhaps due to the sharp contrasts in current regimes of access to media since the adoption of social media. Moreover, the challenges faced as African governments operating in some semblance of democracy grapple with leadership, service, accountability, and popular civic participation are reflected in the media, in factual and fictional forms. The realities reflected also constitute the focus in fields such as Development Communication, also Social and Behaviour Change Communication, which better acknowledge the cultural contexts of participation (See Federal Ministry of Health Nigeria, 2017).

### **Validate not so new missions**

African scholars like Ugboajah with his concepts of Oramedia (1982-3; 1986: 86) have shown that, though they had received scant attention, much occurs within the realm of folk and popular cultures. Attention to media texts and qualitative research traditions—genres and their narratives, discourses, cultural and historical specificities of texts—find currency in African media, and film studies has thus been fuelled. Popular culture has since gained respectability globally especially with the entrenching of Cultural Studies, thanks to the work of pioneers like Raymond Williams, and University of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies under Richard Hoggarth and Stuart Hall. Concerns about ideology and meanings has meant that analysis of even the most innocuous of texts can now be deemed rational, useful for mapping broad ideological patterns that occur within the media. The volume of business recorded by the culture industries—especially with popular music, film, the circulation and reverberation of new forms of entertainment—highlights their influence. Excavating deeper cultural associations in messages, mapping how texts are to be read is a task that must be done, especially if African media are to communicate effectively across boundaries within and outside the continent. Critical questions about identity and media representations are to be further examined, as well as the impact of popular culture on behaviour patterns, especially when these forms are culled to convey appropriate messages to their teeming audiences.

## **Digital media era**

Although the adoption of social media signals the evolution of new cultures, this is largely uncharted territory that scholars and media professionals around the world are having to respond to. It may prove to be the space which African studies can be most instructive, given that the rate of adoption recorded on the continent has been most dramatic. From the pitiful rate of penetration of traditional mass media, access to a range of media platforms has been democratised, thanks to the internet and the now ubiquitous smart mobile phones (Ekwealor, 2018; Internet World Stats 2017). Message production is no longer the preserve of the professionals. Real change and challenges are evident as new media cultures evolve from media institutions and audiences. New frontiers of knowledge on media influence, group dynamics, media agenda, for example, are likely to be broken as we explore private media encounters that occur amongst African audiences on very public social media or mass self-communication (Castells, 2011). Thus, new behaviours need to be explained, and the remaining obstacles to meaningful participation addressed. New types of texts and opportunities to understand audience response to these should be investigated. So should optimal ways of ensuring impactful media interventions. New patterns of civic participation with audiences as prosumers, trends in both formal and informal voter education should also be explained. It is our hope that this journal will broker such.

## **An overview of papers in this edition**

This maiden edition is a teaser, with four papers and an event review. The first is by one of the founding fathers of Mass Communication, Professor Dennis McQuail (1935 – 2017), whose theory of mass communication has been essential reading for students all around the world. Here, we present what we believe to be his parting words to the academy—the previously unpublished transcript of his presentation at a conference hosted by the School of Media and Film, University of Winchester. He grapples with the definition of news and the dilemmas that exist in the practice of journalism, including the fundamental claims to professionalism—is it a vocation or profession? Such provocative thoughts are the legacy of the sage as he suggested that our study of the media and communication be mindful of nuanced cultural experience.

Olatunji's potted account of advertising in Nigeria is offered in recognition of the links between the cultural aspects of this enterprise and the economy. He traces the trajectory of the industry, showing that the creatives in westernised advertising agencies tap into indigenous practices. This is possible even within a globalised economy, given that advertisers seek to maintain local ties to remain relevant to consumers. This submission provokes deep thought and helps to set the agenda for

future research. Olatunji argues that academy and industry need to be concerned about those who design messages—what constitutes adequate educational preparation for them, considering the skills sets and information required for their tasks? Researchers and practitioners should be concerned about message effectiveness—what types of messages work, for whom, and under what conditions? Considering message effectiveness calls for research from a range of disciplines, and highlights the need to study advertisements as texts; to examine the links to culture existing in them.

Scholarship in African Film Studies needs to keep pace with the phenomenal growth recently experienced in the industry, as more Africans embrace the challenge of telling their own stories using modern technology. Controversies around the democratisation of production technologies and what constitutes film, and charges of film's corrupting influence, or the sheer acculturation of films audiences, show the need to facilitate regular debates and coalesce thoughts from different strands of practitioners and critical scholars from around the continent and beyond. As an academic who also makes film and has worked on the continent, Bakari is well placed to address these issues. His paper helps to contextualise the issues besetting the practice and scholarship of film in Africa as a basis for the scholarly agenda of this journal. In it, we encounter how different film technologies have been adapted in ways peculiar to African cultures and people, and different models for film production and distribution, including community projects. The attention to inevitable collisions of African film makers with established canons points to debates about the cinematic versus the appropriated and adapted. The discussion features examples of African cinematic industry including less well known initiatives in East Africa—spawned in part by the success of Nigeria's Nollywood.

The processes through which globally recognisable organisations wield influence is seldom questioned. Besides the commercial conglomerates whose products are used or encountered in the media, there are organisations like the UN agencies whose actions impact critical aspects of living. Prominent as they are, the internal dynamics of these and their relationships with the media upon whom they rely is often not examined. These are strategic institutions, considering their multi-sectoral and intergovernmental remit, their privilege of working transnationally, and their national operations spanning the hierarchy of governmental authorities, from local to regional and central. Fayoyin's paper, situated in the context of UN agencies, offers some insight into such organisations, highlighting the challenges occurring in a range of public institutions and private corporations with global operations that seek to influence citizens directly and through the media. From an insider's perspective, he addresses dilemmas regarding their communication with internal and external audiences. The paper demonstrates how organisations are at once objects of focus,

and advocates for particular interests. His observations bear relevance to cross-cultural communication, and the scenario vividly illustrates the logic of integrated marketing communications.

The Event Review in this volume focuses on the African Women in Media 2018 conference. It is fitting to give due attention to the position of women in society in the context of recent global trends, such as the revelation of gender pay gaps in the BBC, and workplace sexual harassment as captured in Hollywood and the #MeToo movement. These accounts show that gender inequalities persist even for those otherwise regarded as empowered women. The conference and event review are justified by the fact that African dimensions of these issues may not remain obscure.

In summary, as the task for research in Africa is broad and multifaceted, the approaches to research must be similarly so. No more can the preference for quantitative research exist by itself, In spite of the claims to its ability to provide sound scientific evidence for setting benchmarks of comparison between nations and administrative units within them, the preference for quantitative research is no longer sufficient, as with deficits in social infrastructure, the confidence in the big picture remains elusive. Where broad patterns have been captured, qualitative inquiries are still required to unravel underlying questions raised in the observed patterns. For this reason, CCA welcomes and encourages studies from a range of research traditions. We expect contributors to raise methodological issues, and rely on the empirical evidence in the reflections from the professional to prompt the theoreticians. We should consider the best ways to gain information about media and communication in Africa. Let new and persisting debates be reflected in this journal, whilst being distinctive.

In fulfilling the challenge, we commit to the usual standards of excellence that will gain us the esteem indices which will enhance our visibility. Many thanks to our publishers the Winchester University Press for facilitating this.

Enjoy the read!

## References

- Carpentier, N. (2011). *Media and Participation: Ideological - Struggle*. Bristol: Intellect.
- Castells, M. (2011). *Communication Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ekenyerengozi, M. C. (2016). How Nollywood Redefined Conversations on African Cinema and Culture in IndieWire online Retrieved on 13.11.2018 from <https://www.indiewire.com/2016/01/how-nollywood-redefined-conversations-on-african-cinema-and-culture-162257>
- Ekwealor, V. (2018). Mobile Internet Subscriptions in Nigeria hit a 100.9 million high. Retrieved on 13.11.2018 from Techpoint Africa <https://techpoint.africa/2018/04/18/nigeria-mobile-internet-subscription-february-2018>.
- Federal Ministry of Health Nigeria. (2017). *National Social and Behavioural Change Communication (SBCC) Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) in Nigeria 2016 – 2020* Abuja: Federal Ministry of Health, Nigeria.
- Jenkins, F. and Ugboajah, F. (1986). *Communication in Industrialising Countries*. London: Macmillan.
- Jenkins, H. Ito, M. & Boyd, D. (2016). *Participatory Culture in a Networked Era: A Conversation on Youth Learning Commerce and Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press
- Gunter, B. (2000) *Media Research Methods: Measuring Audiences, Reactions and Impact*. London: Sage
- Internet World Statistics. (2018). Internet Users Statistics for Africa. Retrieved on 13.11.2018 from <https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm>
- Maia, R. (2014). Mass Media Representation, Identity-Building and Social Conflicts: Towards a Recognition-Theoretical Approach. In R. Maia, *Recognition and the Media*. (pp. 27 - 46). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ugboajah, F. O. (1982 - 3). "Oramedia" or Traditional Media as Effective Communications Options for Rural Development in Africa. in *Communication Socialis Year Book* .Vol. 11, Rome.