

DIGITISING IGBO CULTURE OF COMMUNICATION IN THE ERA OF DIGITAL MEDIA FOR THE PRESERVATION OF IGBO CULTURE AND IDENTITY

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Abstract

This study examined the process of digitizing Igbo culture of communication in the era of digital media conundrum. The interface of digital communication

within a developed communication cultures have continued to expand. Digital communication opportunities with deliberate concentration in the area of audience segmentation and attraction have continued to widen the communication gap. Communication culture of any nation is often rooted in their values, belief and culture and by extension, the unfolding technological development within its realm. Igbo communication culture often takes the form of interpersonal communication with little or no traces into the digital space. Scholar believed that Igbo culture communication is yet to respond to pressure of influence of digital media. Lauber (2022) believes that communication culture creates corporate culture that often give rise to healthy communication that actively seek constructive input, reward for teamwork in order to manage identity of the people. This study reviewed the concepts of Mapping a Field of Research (MFR), Synthesizing the State of Knowledge (SSK), and Creating Agenda for further Research, CAR), on digitizing Igbo culture of communication in the era of digital media. The study adopted Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) to review the researchers' contribution on the digitising Igbo culture of communication. Findings showed that the concepts of MFR, SSK and CAR have not attracted much of researchers' interests. The study recommended that researchers should beam their research interests on the premise of MFR, SSK and CAR for the preservation of Igbo culture of communication in the era of digital media.

Keywords: Communication, culture, Igbo race, Digital space, Digital media

Introduction

The identity of any nations is often projected, expanded and developed based on the adopted communication culture. The definition of culture by many scholars (Luisa, 2024; Ene, 2014) have given credence to understanding other factors that often interfaced with ones culture. This identifiable interface includes means of transmitting such culture from generation to generation. Communication culture as a concept has had tremendous influence on a number of factors; these factors include identity, social development and societal cohesion among others. Communication as social identity is referred to the ways groups or individuals define themselves in relations to the identity that constitute its roots, nationality, ethnicity, gender and social class. Igbo culture of communication is a total demonstration of national identity and beliefs that have stayed and enveloped with the people for centuries without any modern incursion to the feature and components that formed its operational methodology. Communication and social developed is a concept that has existed for the purpose of tracking social growth and development through an identifiable culture of communication. Over the years, Igbo culture of communication has formed part of the Igbo's historical artifact that has refused to embrace the force of digitization through social networking services (SNS).

The process of revamping Igbo culture of communication in the face of technological diffusion traversing every section of human communication is practically slow. Igbo culture of communication has been projected with no development attribute and positioning for technological influence. Ezea (2015) reports that in Igbo culture of communication and information dissemination mechanism is still through the crude communication infrastructure such as town crier (Ọkụekwe), metal gong (ogene) and other crude means of information dissemination or circulation. At present, there are no any identifiable means through which these information dissemination approaches have taken a leap from its crude form to a digital landscape or platform to put Igbo culture of communication to a global map and for generations yet unborn to appreciate.

It is evident that other culture of communication has transformed from its crude approach to digital platforms that support unequal distribution and circulation to reach wider audience and for record purpose. Digital media platforms through social networking services are reshaping the ways in which cultural identities are formed, expressed and largely negotiated (Ene, 2014). Developing a platform that enables digital integration of Igbo culture of communication and means of information dissemination will compliment Igbo voices because digital platforms are redefining cultural believes and practice. Ene further reported that digital platforms have provided unprecedented opportunities for cultural expression and

exchange, allowing marginalized voices to reach wider audience (Ene, 2014).

In a digital environment, a structured culture of communication no doubt influences what people communicate, to whom they communicate, and how they communicate. Conceptual knowledge of Igbo culture of communication in the era of digital media will present a novel understanding of how digital media interact, influence and project communication objective of the marginalized voices. In the word of Karen, James and Fatama (2009), communication processes occur in specific cultural contexts, with unique normative beliefs, assumptions, and shared symbols. These symbols of Igbo culture of communication no doubt distinguish Igbo as a peculiar people with significant normative beliefs that require a systematic literature review.

To assess researchers input and contribution in the sustenance of Igbo culture of communication in Nigeria, it is expedient to evaluate the trajectory of communication researcher's position and other cognate disciplines' efforts in safeguarding Igbo culture of communication. This will help to project the Igbo race in the scope of information and knowledge transfer especially in this digital era. Therefore, this study tends to review the concept of digitizing Igbo culture of communication in the era of digital media, in order to assess the presence and adaptability strategies of researchers in the field of Igbo culture of communication in the digital space. In this study, Mapping a Field of Research (MFR), Synthesizing the State of Knowledge (SSK), and Creating an Agenda for further Research

(CAR) were contextualized to serve as the focus of the review. Leveraging on this approach helped the researchers to analyze the concept of digitizing Igbo culture of communication in the lens of researchers for the purpose(s) of unifying the Igbo race.

Research Objectives

The broad objectives of this study is to validate researchers' contributions by reviewing the available literatures with three concepts in mind (Mapping a Field of Research (MFR), Synthesizing the State of Knowledge (SSK), and Creating Agenda for further Research, CAR) on the digital construct of Igbo culture of communication in the era of digital media. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To review researchers reports about MFR on digitizing Igbo culture of communication in the era of digital media.
2. To assess researchers approach on SSK in digitizing Igbo culture of communication in the era of digital media.
3. To assess researchers ability in CAR on digitizing Igbo culture of communication in the era of digital media.

Research Questions

1. What contribution has MFR made on digitizing Igbo culture of communication in the era of digital media?
2. Has SSK made any contribution in digitizing Igbo culture of communication in the era of digital media?

3. What role has CAR played in digitizing Igbo culture of communication in the era of digital media?

Research Methodology

This study adopted Semi-Systemic Review as part of Critical Review Research Methodology to review the concept of Igbo culture of communication in consideration of the availability of digital component of Igbo culture of communication its presence and adaptability strategies in the digital space for the propagation of Igbo culture and unity. The critical reviews method aimed to provide a critical evaluation and interpretative analysis of existing literature in Nigeria and beyond.

The researchers reviewed a total of twenty two (22) articles in duration of five (5) years, (2020-2025), that are relevant to the subject of enquiry. These articles were assessed online and in the Social Science section of the General Library of Ebonyi State University, to trace the trajectory of research findings in the area of digitization of Igbo culture of communication. The essence is to find out potential contributions of researchers whose interest lies on digitizing Igbo culture of communication as means of projecting Igbo culture of communication for the generation unborn in the era of digital media. The review was strategically done to query the availability of previous researches dedicated to mapping a field of research, synthesizing the state of knowledge and creating an agenda for further research in projecting Igbo culture of communication.

Means of Information Dissemination in Igbo Land

The documented evidence(s) of information dissemination approach in Igbo land has remain static in all contexts; (no technological influence, no modernization of these equipment, no influence of culture shock because digital media is creating and influencing changes in various cultures). This has demonstrated that Igbo culture of communication has resisted all social influence that has affected every other traditional media of communication. Wilsion in Akakuru, Nwokedi and Edi (2015) listed many types of traditional communication instrument to include:

Idiophones: These are made of self sounding instruments or technical wares, which produce sound without the addition or use of an intermediary medium. The type of sound or messages that emanates from the materials from which the instruments are made and they could be shaken, scratched, struck, pricked (pulled) or pressed with the feet. This type of communication instrument includes; the gong, woodblock, wooden drum, bell and rattle. These instruments have remained the way there were from the ancient days to the present era of digital media. Creating a digital archive or repository will help in safeguarding these important instruments that represent Igbo culture of communication (Nwankwegu, 2021).

Membranophones: This is communication instrument in Igbo land or media of communication which sounds are produced through the vibration of membranes. They

include all varieties of skin or leather drum. These drums are beaten or struck with well-carved sticks. The Igbo used these drums for the purpose of information dissemination in Igbo land. Though, some believed that it is a borrowed communication instrument because the Yoruba have laid claim that the instrument originated from their land.

These skin drums of various sizes and shapes abound in all Nigerian traditional societies especially in Igbo land. This is the most popular means of communication in many Igbo societies today traditionally. This is because it is the most exposed and intricate in its craftsmanship. This drum is called the “talking drum” in Yoruba land and locally called “dundun” in Igbo land.

During the slave trade era, this drum was extensively used to save slave victims from the hands of the slave merchants by using the instrument to inform the slave victims of an opportunity to take to their heels. This cultural instrument that is this rich in culture, tradition and values with deep sense of community deserved to be virtually preserved in this era of digital media (Chibueze, 2023).

Aerophones: These are means of communication which produce sound as a result of the vibration of a column of air. These comprise communication instrument such as the flute family; whistle reed pipes, hones and trumpets etc. This communication instrument has been used for ages in Igbo land and its relevance as means of communication is still valid. Though, the process of

digitizing these instruments for the purpose of wider appreciation and use is still elusive. As a music instrument relevant and rooted in Igbo culture, researchers' interest in this all important Igbo culture of communication deeply lies on the analysis of its sound and its benefit to music formation (Gonzalex and Prati, 2022). In an attempt to analyze its validity to audio characterization, they described the instrument as open ended research topic with no formal concentration of researchers either in the preservation of the instrument or digitizing it for future evaluation and use.

Symbolography: This simply means symbolic writing or representation that help communication objectives to take place. It is the process of adopting symbolic writings to depict various meaning especially when encoders use graphic representations to convey a message which is understood within the context of a known social event and an accompanying verbal message. Igbo culture is reach in may symbols that can be used to represent noble and innovative ideas. In many contemporary research reports, symbolography only enjoy descriptive dissections (Adesanya, Ahmed and Johnson, 2025) with no concrete approach in digitizing this Igbo phenomenon symbolic writing technique especially in this era of digitization.

As a descriptive representational device for conveying meaning, there are many of them, but the well known one usually in Igbo land is called "uri". This is a special kind of writing in Igbo land that showcases various meanings to a segmented public who know and

practice the art. Various writings are examples which are used in wall painting as well as on human body that depicts various meanings that ought to be transferred from generation to generation for the sole purpose of uniquely preserving the Igbo identity.

Signals: These are the physical embodiment of a message. In many parts of Igbo land, so many ancient signals are still in existence. Ejere and Adeleke-Sola (2023) observed that signals are used in most Igbo communities as an effective communication apparatus. In the contemporary media environment, especially, radio or television broadcasting, the broadcasting stations in Nigeria always developed and maintained a particular signals to draw the attention of the listeners that they are about to begin transmission for the day.

In Igbo traditional communication, some of the signals include fire, gunshots, canon shots, drum (wooden or skin) are still practically deployed for communication purposes, yet researchers are yet to create pathway that recommend evidence based measures for digitizing this all important instruments.

Signs: Signs are marks that are meaningful or objects or symbols used to present an idea in other to communicate effectively. It can be said to be construct by which organisms affect the behaviour or state of another in a communication context. For instance sign language (i.e. system of communication by gestures) has been developed for the deaf in all the Nigerian communities and even across board. While signs are more associated

with specific denotative meanings, while symbols usually carry along with them connective meaning as well.

Natural signs require an interpreter who knows a theory or general law in terms of which the sign is an index of the existence of some other things. Signs as ways of communicating meanings and ideas are rich traditional means of communication in Igbo land. This communication culture may not be peculiar to Igbo people alone, but each culture of communication has its own that describes their peculiarity and existence. Most scholars associated sign with language, excluding its all important role in communication, identity preservation and cultural reorientation (Qiao, Zhang, Mao and Lin, 2024).

Despite the forms of communication mentioned above, traditional institutions, clubs or societies in Igbo land often use sign for the purpose of dissemination of information, passing on gossips, rumour, maintenance of culture and at times highly confidential information. Institutions in Igbo land such as, Esusu group, clans, towns, village, family unions, ethnic unions, drinking clubs, old students association, market women association, age grade, secret societies, cult groups and so many other associations too numerous to mention have one unique sign that they use to identify their members and transfer one form of information or the other.

Over the years, this instrument despite the forces of technological innovations in the area of information dissemination and the revolutions in information and

communication technology (ICT) plus the changing communication landscape and transformation witnessed over the years, Igbo culture of communication remains resilient to these forces. These instruments of Igbo culture of communication are still in their crude forms and many communities still deploy them for the purpose of information dissemination in their various communities.

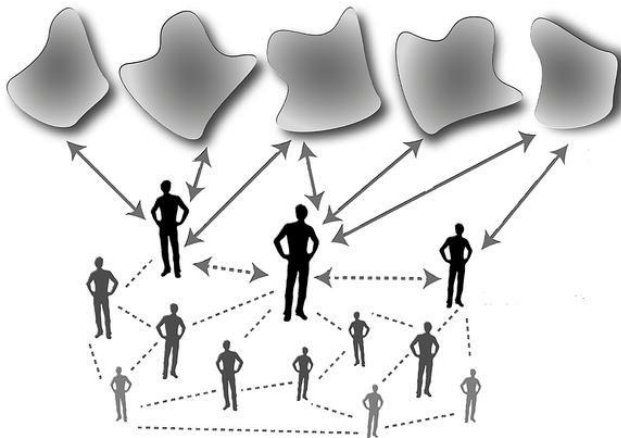
Identities, Communication and Culture, the Igbo Example

The identity of people is often a reflection of a number of factors; these factors includes; belief, value, language, culture and geographical location. These factors predispose them to social and cultural identification that represent their uniqueness and identifiable traits that single them out from the many. The issue of identity and communication is linked to each other. Howarth (2011) believes that our identities shape the ways we see and represent ourselves, it also shapes how we communicate, what we communicate about, how we communicate with others, and how we communicate about others. This is a clear indication that identity and communication shape human existence and Igbo are no exceptions.

In Igbo culture, identity is deeply intertwined with communication practices, which are heavily influenced by their rich traditions, values, and customs, expressed through language, proverbs, music, dance, and social interactions. In all contributing to a strong sense of

community and identity associated within the Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria. These essentially and evidently influence in many identifiable ways how they communicate, which reflects and reinforces their unique cultural identity as a people.

Communication and cultural identity have been playing various roles in the stabilization of unique identity of people. Cultural identity can be described as an individual's sense of self often derived from formal or informal membership in groups that transmit and inculcate knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, traditions, and ways of life Daphne (2007). A broad conception of cultural identity taken into cognizance of the Igbo people is a clear, distinct and enterprising people. Igbo's identity formation is long history that requires documentary evidence that requires a balanced component and related narrative of vocation, class, geography, philosophy, language, and other social aspects of biology as process of forming social identity. Cultural identity no doubt changes overtime through communication to evoke emotions of self worth. It is intertwined with power and privilege, affected by close relationships, and negotiated through communication, Shin and Jackson (2003).



Shin and Jackson's (2003) Identity Research in Communication Theory

In conceptualizing cultural identity Shin and Jackson the two renowned communication and identity researchers believed that cultural precepts regulate growth identity, when they stated that “a set of values and precepts embedded in once culture is expected to direct people’s belief in conformity of their existence. It is a complex of affirmations, rooted in the historical past and ceremonially celebrated in the present, partially enacted in the laws of the land and partly not. Like all creeds, it is a profession of faith, a part of cultural tradition sanctified by the larger traditions of which it is a part”. Igbo in this regard, requires identity push through the expansion and digitization of her communication culture to establish her identity in the digital footprint.

Digital integration of Igbo Culture of Communication

Integrating digital technologies with Igbo culture of communication presently lacks a well coordinated interface between the researchers and technology experts. This coordination is necessary because Igbo culture of communication has been preserved at the moment without proper integration of digital technology. Apart from few technological drive as reported by Nwankwegu, (2021), on preserving Igbo language through social media and online resources such as application development, blogging and documentary approaches in preserving Igbo language and promoting Igbo cultural practices, nor any other identifiable move are geared towards digitizing Igbo culture of communication to address challenges like empirical data scarcity and funding for Igbo language technology that included Igbo culture of communication.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Communication Theory of Identity (CTI). This theory was developed by Michael Hecht and colleagues; the theory emerged in the 1980s as part of a shift from considering identity a central element of human existence to identity as a social phenomenon (Greene, 2009). The early view of this theory typically emphasized the western notion of “self” as a single, unified identity (Delia 1987). The broader conceptualization of the theory argues that humans are inherently social beings whose lives revolve around communication, relationships, and communities and who

operate from multiple and shifting identities (Hargie, 2006).

In the framework of this study, the identity of the Igbo people whose culture of communication is suffering digital and technological influence, needs a real composition of how true identity can be refocused to enable her culture of communication reflect the digital composition for the sustenance of Igbo culture. As a result, identities and identification are key processes through which people and groups orient themselves to each other and the world around them. This theory explicates multilayered identities such as personal, enacted, relational, and communal identity. It is one of a few theories that highlight communication as a core component of identity, rather than merely an outcome of identity management or a process that creates identity (Greene, 2003). The conceptual analysis of Communication Theory of Identity aptly supported the main objective of the study which seeks to evaluate the intricacies of digitizing the Igbo culture of communication as means of preserving Igbo culture and identity in the era of digital media.

Data Presentation

The researchers concentrated the review/analysis on the three basic reverberating causal effect of mapping a field of research, (MFR) synthesizing the state of knowledge (SSK) and creating agenda for further research (CAR) in digitizing Igbo culture of communication in the last five year.

Table 1: Researchers topics of study, author/year of publication on three basic casual effect of MFR, SSK and CAR in digitizing Igbo culture of communication.

S/ N	Research Title	Author/ Year Pub.	MFR	SSK	CAR	Remarks
1.	Understanding culture, and cultural heritage in the Post-Digital age.	Luisa, C. (2024).	-	-	-	No evidence of MFR, SSK and CAR
2.	Exploring the Influence of Language on Cultural Identity.	Mohammad, A.F., Muhammad, K., Ullah, F. & Haroon, H. (2024).	-	-	-	No evidence of MFR, SSK and CAR
3.	Adversarial Attacks and Defenses for Digital Communication Signals Identification	Qiao, P., Zhang, S., Mao, S., & Lin, Y. (2024).	-	-	-	No evidence of MFR, SSK and CAR
4.	Influence of Signs and Symbols on Preservation Of Traditional Communication Practices In Nigeria (Case Study of Ohafia LGA Abia State.	Ejere, U.,S. & Adeleke -Sola, D., S. (2023).	-	-	-	No evidence of MFR, SSK and CAR

5.	Blending Igbo with Tech: Unleashing Innovation and Creativity.	Chibueze, F., O. (2023).	-	-	-	No evidence of MFR, SSK and CAR
6.	Acoustic Analysis of Musical Timber of Wooden Aerophones.	Gonzalez, Y., & Prati, R., C. (2022).	-	-	-	No evidence of MFR, SSK and CAR
7.	Leveraging Digital Technology for Igbo Language Development	Nwankwe gu, A., J. (2021).	1	-	-	No evidence of MFR, SSK and CAR
8.	Representation, Identity and Resistance in Communication	Howarth, C. (2021).	-	-	-	No evidence of MFR, SSK and CAR
9.	Indigenous Language in New Media: Opportunities and Challenges for Language Revitalization	Morgan, C., (2019).	-	-	-	No evidence of MFR, SSK and CAR
10.	Digitising folktales: Cultural remediation and children's participation	Ogbonna-Oluikpe, A. (2021).	2	-	-	No evidence of MFR, SSK and CAR

Source: Nwamini, *et al*, 2025

Results and Discussion

The Semi-Systemic Review (SSR) was adopted as a research methodology. The essence was to provide a critical evaluation and interpretative analysis of existing

literature in Nigeria and beyond that focused on the digitizing Igbo culture of communication. A total of twenty-two (22) articles were reviewed by the researchers, for a period of five (5) years, 2019-2024. Out of this number, ten (10) articles were found useful for the study. The key major focus of MFR, SSK and CAR lacked empirical evidence in the entire article reviewed.

For instance, MFR recorded only two (2) reports in the researchers' topic of studies thus; *digitizing Igbo language and digitizing Igbo folklore*, as reported by *Nwankwegu, (2021) and Ogbonna-Oluikpe (2021)*. These researchers mapped a field of research in digitizing Igbo language and folklore which is an offshoot of Igbo culture of communication. The importance of language in communication underscores the casual effect of MFR in SSK and CAR. Despite this relative compliance in MFR in these two key components; digitizing Igbo language and Igbo folktale, Igbo communication culture is not represented as an important segment of Igbo identity that requires preservation and sustainability for future generation to appreciate and adored.

It is empirically validated to report that researchers are beaming less research light on digitizing Igbo culture of communication for the preservation of Igbo culture and identity. The researcher further observed that no single research finding critically revealed the importance of MFR in digitization of Igbo culture of communication as means of pushing the preservation and identity debate in the era of digital

media. This implies that researchers in this parts of the world especially those in the field of digital media, media and society, sociology of mass media and African communication system have not beamed their research light into tracing the connections between publications, concepts, keywords, and authors citations to understanding the casual effects between MFR, SSK and CAR connection to digitization of Igbo culture of communication to upscale the debate of digital identity for the preservation of once culture.

The concept of SSK in the available literature reviewed also witnessed a huge academic stillbirth in the knowledge available on digitizing Igbo culture of communication. The concept of SSK is truly lacking in the literature reviewed and demonstrated a gross inadequacy of the prerequisite knowledge availability on the reviewed articles. The implication of these revelations is that researchers in the field of digitization of Igbo culture of communication are yet to begin the process of gathering, analyzing and integrating information from various sources to create a comprehensive understanding in the areas of digital innovation and research resources that enhances Igbo culture of communication. This would help to identify gap and formulation of new insights to ensure proper integration of Igbo culture of communication into the digital environment for the propagation of Igbo culture and for the development of Igbo people.

The concept of CAR in digitizing Igbo culture of communication is an important concept that that would have defined the projection of researchers' intent to

institutionalize a process of validating Igbo culture of communication through research. The articles reviewed by the researchers substantially showed that research trajectory is lacking in this direction. Therefore, creating a research agenda that will encourage researchers in the area of digital media in other to interrogate the benefit of establishing a consolidated research agenda that will stand the test of time is still a mirage. The implication of this finding is that Igbo culture of communication may likely not found its feet in the digital world if a deliberate, focused and conscious research agenda is not developed and aggressively pursued by researchers in this area.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study conclude that in the area of MFR in digitizing Igbo culture of communication as means of preserving Igbo culture and identity in the era of digital media has not received or engendered researchers' interest to further enhance the debate of digitizing Igbo culture of communication and thereby, leaving the area very fallow, research wise. Therefore, no concrete research effort is geared towards the sustenance of Igbo culture of communication; the study then recommends that MFR is not only critical in this era of digital media for the sustenance of Igbo culture and identity and for the preservation of those cultures of communication for generations yet unborn.

In the areas of conceptualizing SSK and CAR in digitizing Igbo culture of communication, researchers need to demonstrate concerted and deliberate efforts to

address these key areas. The study recommended that SSK and CAR in this era of digital media is pertinent to ensure that Igbo culture of communication is transmitted from generation to generation through digitization of Igbo culture of communication.

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