Globalization and National Development: Implication on Public Relations Practice

Tina C. Touitou, Lawojunta
Lecturers, Department of Mass Communication, Babcock University, Ilishan Remo,
Ogun State, Nigeria

Abstract:

*T**he paper emphasizes on the fact that, ICTs in the emergence of globalization have brought about transformations of some positive effects and defects in the media practice, especially in Public relations profession and on its audiences, which lead to changes in the mass communication process such as: concentration of ownership, audience fragmentation, hyper commercialism, and lack of distinction among media. The study also exposes the double-edge sword nature of globalization, and recommends that globalization should not be something to worship or demonize, but as something to mold, shape and manage for the betterment of everyone and for the national development. Andit draws its conclusion from the fact that, ICT'spower for good and for bad resides on the local media.*

Key Word: Dependency Theory, Gate keeping and Selection Media Theory, Reinforcement Theory, Globalization, Public Relations.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Globalization is one rapidly growing area that scholars all over the world focus their attention on today. There is no doubt the current trend towards it is obviously alarming, and it impact is hunting the Africa continent and Nigeria in particular in every ramifications: economically, politically, and socially and so on. Globalization, as a concept has brought in more of confusion than enlightenment, because very few people can agree on what it means.

Oyeshile [2004:14] opines that many African scholars today are disturbed about what fate will befall Africans considering the irreversible globalization trend. Globalization took off mainly from economic and later information perspectives in terms of commodity and market and the reduction of space and time in human communication.

There is no doubt that 'globalization' today is characterized by an integration of the economies of the world through trade and financial flows, technology and information exchanges, and even the movement of people from one place to another. The dominant factor is based on the free market [Iyanda, 20004: 31].

NayanChanda [2000] asserts that 'globalization' has grown from jargon to a cliché. People around the globe are more connected to each other than ever before. Information and money flow more quickly than ever. Goods and services produced in one part of the world are increasingly available in all parts of the world. International travel is more frequent and faster, while International communication is commonplace and virtually not new.

The exceptional contributions of globalization cannot be over emphasized, in information technology [IT] and communication links and networks.AndinsupportChuka [2002], asserts that the magical conquest of distance, time and cultural inhibition makes globalization an outstanding development in the history of mankind.

Aina [2003:24], opines that people of varied races have been brought together in small and increasingly smaller communities, in that within split seconds, communications are established across continents. It has also been confirmed as part of the gains of globalization that business firms located several oceans apart now merge into global conglomerates while some hitherto local indigenous cuisines have become international. Globalization, with the attendant interactions and intermingling of economic forces of state inter- connected, where national boundaries are less important. The excitement generated by this new dictum has, however, created a wide gulf in global transformation with the less developed countries like Nigeria at a big disadvantage.

McQuail [2005] asserts that the pace of internalization has accelerated because of advances in distribution technology and new economic imperatives. The mass media are affected, like everything else, by the general phenomenon of globalization. They [mass media] are in special position themselves as both object and agent of the globalization process. They are also the means by which one becomes aware of it. Change in distribution technology have been the most evident and immediate cause of change

Ojebode [2004], opines that there are strong arguments that rather than the developing countries being beneficiaries of media globalization; the media and national development have been victims of the globalize media world. The links, networks and connections created by globalization have crept into the media, bringing about transformations of some positive effects and defects in the media practice, especially, the Public relations being the adjunct of mass media, and communication process is equally affected

Another dimension of media globalization is reflected in the ownership of global media conglomerates. The leading conglomerates in the United States for example, are owned and controlled by business tycoons from different nations, whose aim are to maximize profit [McQuail, 2005:246]. On this note of media ownership and control, Onabajo [2001:13] sheds light on the case in Nigeria. He states that, "the sad phenomenon is that broadcast novices are the ones establishing

radio and television stations because of the huge capital layout", instead of seeking sound professional advice before procuring equipment, they invest in sophistication rather than in equipment functionality.

However, it is interesting to know that the global flow of information is not welcome by everyone, due to perceived implications of such flow. Based on worried by the apparent implications of media globalization, the UNESCO for instance, inaugurated the McBride Commission to study "the question of how to maintain national and cultural sovereignty in the face of rapid globalization of mass media" [Baran, 1999: 468].

In the report, Ojebode said that the Commission recommended a new order called, the New World Information and Communication Order [NWICO]. This entails, among other things, absolute sovereignty of developing nations over all of their information sources; increased control by developing nations over world communication institutions; more coverage of ongoing projects rather than of coups, riots and disasters; increased horizontal communication among developing nations; and better international news ratio in favor of developing nations [McBride al et, 1980]. These and many others are some of the challenges that befall the developing countries like Nigeria in globalize media trend

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The links, networks and connections created by globalization through ICT have crept into the Public relations [PR] practice, bringing about transformations of some positive effects and defects, which lead to changes in the Mass Communication process. For instance, the concentration of ownership, audience fragmentation, specialization and convergence were influencing the nature of the mass communication process, and thereby influencing the Public relations practice too as an adjunct of Mass communication. Specialization and the convergence are big challenges facing the Public relations profession, and it comes in two forms: attracting larger numbers of specialists such as: PR environmentalists and industrialists. With the increasing number of media outlets used in Public relations campaigns that base on new and converging technologies as a result of globalization. It has imposed problem that needs a solution. The focused of the study is to expose the impacts of globalization on the mass media of communication, especially, in the Public relations practice in Africa and in Nigeria in particular. And the two-edge sword nature of globalization that must be cautioned with, and the ways by which Public relations practice is responding to globalization.

III. CONCEPT ANALYSIS, DEFINITIONS AND EXPLANATION

Dependency Theory

Baran [2002] asserts that the dependency theory is composed of several assertions:
- The basis of media's influence resides in the "relationship between the larger social system, the media's role in that system and the audience relationships to the media.
- In the modern industrial societies are increasingly dependent on media [a] to understand the social world; [b] to act meaningfully and effectively in society; [c] to find fantasy and escape or diversion.
- The level of dependency is related to [a] the number and centrality [importance] of the specific information-delivery functions served by a medium, and [b] the degree of change and conflict present in society.

The limited effects theory had been neglected here, while dependency theory argues that , especially in the complex and changing society, people become increasingly dependent on media and media content to understand what is going on around them, to learn what to do [how to behave meaningfully], and even sometimes for escape from the reality of the situations. [Melvin &Sandra, [1976].A Public relations as a communication process and adjunct of mass media is accountable for and responsible for any information that is dished out to the public[s]

Gate keeping and Selection Media Theory

The term 'gate keeping' has been widely used as a metaphor to describe the process by which selections are made in media work, especially decisions regarding whether or not to allow a particular news to pass through the 'gate' of a news channels [McQuail, 2005].

He further to says that the gate keeping theory deals with the processes and factors that influence the decisions of media organization, to select or reject potential newsworthy items for public dissemination. The theory postulates that media organizations as well as key media professionals act as gates, to the flood of information coming in from the larger society. These gates are opened to let some kind of information through for processing and publication; or they are shut to deny other kinds of information the opportunity for processing and publication.

Tejumaiye [1999], enumerates the determining factors in which these gates are open or closed. They include factors as: organizational rules; personal dispositions of communication; professionals; structure of information industry; qualitative differences in the roles of key communication personnel; characteristics of the message as well as of the event from which it is sourced; characteristics of the audience; nature of the media, and characteristics of the information sources.

In the light of this research, the media organizations constitute a determining factor in the kind of information or media culture received and disseminated. Therefore, the power to receive or reject information that will develop or harm the societal culture, the society or country is in the ambit of the media or PR organizations.

Attitude Change Theory

The most importance of this theory is related to the ideas of dissonance and selective processes. Dissonance theory argues that when confronted by new or conflicting information people experience a kind of mental discomfort, a

dissonance. As a result, a person tends to consciously and subconsciously work to limit or reduce that discomfort through three interrelate selective processes. These processes help us "select" what information to consume, remember and interpret, is personally important and idiosyncratic ways through the following:

Selective exposure [or selective attention] is the process by which people only expose or attend to those messages consistent with their preexisting attitudes and beliefs. For example, when one spent a lot of money that creates dissonance, the advertising confirm the wisdom of your decision by reducing dissonance will be of benefit to you, and will attract one most:

Selective retention assumes that people remember best and most on those messages that are consistently fits their attitudes and beliefs, while,

Selective perception predicts that people will interpret messages in a manner consistent align with the way they see things or best fits their attitudes and beliefs.

Public relations practitioner realizing the limiting impact of selective processes on the media content, PR. professionals will ensure that all hands are on deck to satisfy the needs and wants of the audience [public[s] or provide practical and realistic information that would reduce dissonance resulting from the impact of globalization.

Reinforcement Theory

Reinforcement theory is very persuasive in nature and needed to apply when at a time when the nation's social fabric had yet to feel the full impact of the cultural change brought about by globalization. In addition, it will be used to flush with enthusiasm and optimism on the globalization that has hit the nations of the world, especially, the developing countries as storm, though; there is still hope or good coming from globalization. This theory was propound by Klaper, 1960] when there was rapid postwar urbanization, industrialization and the increase of women in the workplace. And when church, family, and school began to lose its traditional socializing role.

Is the duty of public relations practitioners to consistently reinforcing the people, by persistently remaining them that globalization has come to stay and nothing to do about it. And to highlight the tremendous development that globalization has brought that has never occurred in the history of mankind. These will surely reduce the dissonance effects and change people's perception, attitudes and briefs. At this juncture, it is penitent to know what globalization and Public relations are all about.

IV. WHAT IS GLOBALIZATION?

Ojebode [2004], opines that globalization of the media of communication has to do with liberalizing access to media products across the nations of the world. It is the process of internationalization of the mass media, such that media products of a nation are received by citizens of other nations on the globe even without the approval of or control by their governments, especially the Satellite and the Internet have brought this to reality.

Thomas [2000], globalization is neither a phenomenon nor just some passing trend. Today it is an over aching international system shaping the domestic politics and foreign relations of virtually every country, and one needs to understand it as such.

Porter [2005] asserts that as thoughtful people concerned about world affairs, our job is to pick up 'globalization', examine it from all sides, dissect it , figure out what makes it thick, and then nurture and promote the good parts and mitigate or slow down the bad parts. Globalization to him is much like fire. Fire itself is neither good nor bad. When used properly; it can cook food, sterilize equipment, form iron, and heat our homes. But used carelessly, fire can destroy lives, towns and forests in an instant.

Friedman [2000], commenting on the strength of globalization said Globalization can be incredibly empowering and coercive. It can democratize opportunities and impediments, leave you behind and at the same time rapidly catch up with you. While it is homogenizing cultures, it is also enables people to share their unique individuality farther and wider. Globalization in no doubt has many dangers with several ugly dark sides. But it can also bring tremendous opportunities and benefits in all facets of human endeavor.

Porter [2005], asserts that globalization will always havecheer-leaders who are bind to the destruction it can cause. It will always have strident opponents who are blind to the way it gives some people their first opportunity to fulfill basic aspirations. As with most issues, the majority of people will be in the middle. Therefore, globalization should not be as something to worship or demonize, but as something to mold, shape and manage for the betterment of everyone. As stated earlier, globalization has been commended and praised for being one of the mediums to national development.

V. THE BENEFITS OF GLOBALIZATION

- It promotes national development by bringing tremendous opportunities and benefits in all facets of human endeavor.
- It foster economic development, as the economy grows and flourishes in every facets of live, the outlook and status of the nation both within and outside the country is highly increased.
- It promotes unification in diversification: despite the different languages, cultures, traditions, philosophies, globalization brings about a form of unity as it gives birth to a mutual ground on which all can come together and speak with one voice and with one mind [global village].
- It has brought about the spread of technological improvement and development, and an increased in the use of technological innovations around the globe.

- It makes the exchange of ideas possible; thus, creates a platform where people from various spheres of life can come together to exchange ideas and share opinions irrespective of their background, status or wealth.

Therefore, despite the benefits, there is still ugly side of globalization. There are strong arguments that rather than the developing countries being beneficiaries, they are victims of the globalize world such as:Over-dependence on technology as people depend more on the technological innovations, ideas and practices adopted by globalization, forgetting other application processes e.g. Computer vs Typing machine, GSM vs Landline etc.

VI. WHAT IS PUBLIC RELATIONS?

Adamolekun and Ekundayo [2002:11], define Public Relations as…..the distinctive management function which helps to establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, acceptance and co-operation between an organization and its publics, involves the management of problems or issues, helps management to keep informed and responsive to [SIC] public opinion, defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest, helps management to keep abreast of and effectively utilize warning system to help anticipate trends, and use research and sound ethical communication techniques as its principal tools.

Nwosu, [2004], states that Pubic Relation' is the profession that influences public opinion or attitude in such a positive direction, understanding and acceptance. It establishes a two-way communication to ensure mutual understanding, or resolve conflicts of interest between individuals, organizations and their publics.

Sam Black [2000:1], opines that the purpose of public relations practice is to establish a two-way communication channel seeking common ground or areas of mutual interest and to establish understanding based on truth, knowledge and adequate information.Public Relations principles recognize that a pro-active approach is the best philosophy for addressing issues that lead to conflict or crisis. Supporting this view, Akinyemi, [1993:99], asserts that "the best tool for managing crisis is making sure that crises do not arise by using the regular Public relations strategy of a planned and sustained programme of communication".

VII.   THE EFFECTS OF GLOBALIZATION ON PUBLIC RELATIONS [PR] PROFESSION

As globalization has affected the Media industries, so as it has come to Public relations profession, both in form of ownership and control, including the reach of Public relations' firm's operations into foreign countries.

The ownership and control problem has been a virus that has affected the PR industry, both in the profession and in practice. Example, Hill and Knowlton [owned by British company WPP Group] and the U.S. firm Burson-Marsteller both maintain major operations around the world [Baran 2002], which brought the problem of 'who blows the piper dictates the tone syndrome' is now hinting the PR practice in Africa, especially in Nigeria

The second trend in Public relations is specialization, for instance, Public Relations Society of America [PRSA] identifies 14 activities of Public relations professionals such as: publicity, communication, public affairs, Government relations, Community relations, Minority relations, Financial Public relations Industry relations, press agency, promotion, Media relations, Issues management, Propaganda and Advertising [Bara 2002], but it is also pertinent to know that specialization had expanded that list. Example, the Environmental Public relations is attracting larger numbers of people [both environmentalists and industrialists]. Another impetus driving specialization has to do with the increasing number of media outlets used in PR campaigns that rely mostly on the new and converging technologies.

For instance, online information and advertising are a growing part of the total Public relations media mix, such as: video news releases, video-conferencing, Television in the form of satellite-delivered media tour, where spokes-people can be simultaneously interviewed by a worldwide audience connected to the on-screen interviewee via telephone, has further extended the reach of Public relations. In addition, desktop publishing has greatly expanded the number and type of available print outlets. All these require professionals with quite specific skills.

Public relations [PR] is responding to the convergence of traditional media with the Internet, and with the acknowledgement of the development of the concept of integrated marketing communications[IMC], by which PR, advertising, marketing and promotion function into a more or less seamless communication campaign on the Web as it is on the television screen and magazine page. But, traditionally, PR., advertising andmarketing are truly complement each other but distinctly different. The aim of IMC is to employ viral marketingwhich is a strategy that relies on targeting specific internet users which is a communication channels with which they are most comfortable. IMC is a process whereby each element of the communications mix is integrated with other tools of the communications mix so that a unified message is consistently reinforced.

Despite the negative impact of globalization, it is still a useful concept which produces results that outweigh the disadvantages that provides hope for the future of a nation.

As it relations to PR as a profession, it provides, produces and presents such a variety of positive changes that cannot be denied or refuted. It is therefore a veritable tool for PR as a profession; with it all sectors of the nation and globe will be touched and changed for the better. Globalization has helped Public relations to reach the public easier and faster. It does this through tools developed by globalization such as: news releases, Internet, video conferencing, and satellite delivered media tour, e-Mail and so.

It helps the PR as profession to expand their market. Thus, globalization is universal; they can reach a wide range of people by using the tools available to expand their market ["global" way]. Also,it helps PR. to knowthe needs of its publics better. As PR's duty is to bridge the gap between the organization and its publics, thus, globalization helps PR to

achieve this by providing room to get to know the limitations and needs of the rural, urban and international citizens in order to create a suitable solution and marketing strategy to solve the problems.Globalization brought about technological advancement in PR practice, as this can be seen in today's world, PR is now achievable through the Internet, television, direct mail and other latest communication gadgets. It's also enables PR professionals to share ideas, corporate goodwill and reputable image globally.

This study examines on how Public relations can achieve growth, profitability and competitiveness through emerging technologies innovation, due to the high levels of impacts and spending that result from this linkage. Smith, &Taylor [2003] noted that Marketing and the Marketing communications mix are changing, new insights, new tools, new opportunities and new challenges are emerging as a result of globalization.Marketing has moved from 'customer acquisition' [winning new customers], through customer retention' [keeping customers for life], towards 'customer reselecting' [dumping unprofitable customers while selectively seeking and keeping the more profitable ones]'. New tools as data-mining, e-marketing, e -tools such as Web, WAP, i-TV and so, even the traditional suppliers or agencies are changing. A part from changing as well as the services they offer, they are changing their names to reflect changes in the marketing services. Example, BursonMarstellar the world's biggest PR agency, has dropped Public relations' from its name, and Saatchi and Saatchi has dropped 'Advertising' from its name. Managers too have to change to accept the need for 'life-long learning', and continually update and improve themselves with new skills, new insights, and new tools.

Leslie Rue and Lloyd [2000:4] assert that the rising rate of environmental, social and technological change, including increase internalization of business and the increasing sensitivity to diversity in the workplace will make the environment of business even more complex and subject to changes.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Nigerian broadcast Media should realize the dreadful implications of globalization to the developing countries, as such, should adopt the projection of national growth and African development, so as to match the best in profession anywhere in the world, yet to be distinctly Nigerian. Therefore, projecting the best and discouraging the worst in the society as good gate-keeper to the national development. For any nation to move forward with regard to national development, technology must form the bedrock of its pursuit on this era of globalization. Therefore, adequate exposure in ICTs is needed in the 21st century in order to meet up in global village trends.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Public relations as a profession bears a negative reputation, therefore, there is urgent needs to call for greater sensitivity to the wants and needs of the various publics.
- Honesty and integrity should be the best watchword in PR practice.
- Globalization requires vigilance and the rule of law. For instance, Anti-trust laws, the Securities and Exchange Commission, Labor unions, Charities, the Federal Trade Commission, and countless other agencies and organizations keep America's capitalism in check. Similar transparent mechanisms are needed to make sure globalization a positive force in the worldwhich is a prerequisite for development.

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