

One World, One Network: Revisiting Digital Dichotomy Theory of the Media

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Abstract

The advancement in Information Communication Technology (ICT) brings about the debate regarding the potentials of technological innovations for inequities and inequalities. Since the 20th century, when McLuhan argued that technologies help extend human capacity, media technologies have been regarded as liberating and empowering. Technologies aided human manipulation of mechanical and electronic processes in the media and communication industries. The paper examines the fundamental issue of digital dominance in information technologies. Interrogates how developing countries may, or have been left behind in the journey towards building knowledge societies because of poor technological infrastructure and systems. The analysis rekindles the global information order to the past, such as media dominance, information inequality, asymmetrical and imbalanced information flow. By adding the power of computing to mechanical and electronic innovation of the past, as captured by MacBride recommends changes to address inequities in global media representations in the 21st-century society. The network societies are now better connected. This conceptual paper discovered that the resultant gluts of information further intensify the nature of global and social challenges. Given digital divide concerns being accelerated as captured in the Digital Dichotomy Theory (DD-Theory) is proposed towards understanding the inherent global media communication dynamics. The theory asserts that entities without the same predisposing factors will often significantly vary in adoption time of current experience(s). The paper found that technology-aided media communication realities do play out and affect humanity in such an uneven manner as well. Within this context, there is a digital dichotomy that affects actual media communication outcomes, especially in developing societies.

Keywords

dichotomy theory;
digital; media;
technology; and one
world; one network



I. Introduction

Societies need information for many purposes in their journey to advancement. Whether it is for building the right physical infrastructure or for enhancing existing social structures, societies require the right kind of knowledge and information. As the central circulatory system carries oxygen to all parts of the body and expels the toxic substances, which could harm the body, the mass media are expected to infuse life-giving information to society, even the most remote members (Pate, 2021). Access to required information helps dispel impediments on the path to the wellbeing of society, be this ignorance or adherence to discordant beliefs and thoughts. The media are expected to promote harmonious living in society. Technology was meant to enhance media efficiency (Kurfi et al., 2021).

Advancement in Digital Information Communication Technologies (D-ICTs) has heralded the arrival of digital media. However, due to the digital divide across countries and continents, the gains are uneven across the world. As technology-based media communication imperatives are increasing potent aspects of knowledge-driven societies, there is an urgency to advance theoretical insights on the issue towards gaining a better perspective of media communication imperatives, especially about the position of the technological-dependent nation. Thus, this paper examines the theme of One World, One Network within the context of Dichotomy Theory to help interrogate the position of digital media communication dependencies. Premised on empirical inferences such as Technological Determinism as pre-existing theoretical frames, the paper argues that technologies may influence media communication imperatives in every society. However, there is a digital dichotomy and often affects the actual media communication outcomes, especially in developing countries like Nigeria (Mojaye & Aondover, 2022).

Therefore, the call by Nyam (2021) to maximise the impact of technology is such that countries, governments, and other stakeholders as well as communication scholars ought to put all resources and expertise together towards meeting the technological oriented digital media communication needs of the society. Given digital divide concerns being accelerated by ICT, the need to revisit the Digital Dichotomy Theory (DD-Theory) is important as this paper proposed it to be a better way of understanding the inherent global media communication dynamics. This is so because the basic assumption of the theory is that entities without the same predisposing factors will often significantly vary in the adoption time of current experience(s). Thus, technology do aid media communication realities to play out and affect humanity in such disparities.

Nyam (2021) observed that the whole gamut of media classifications and applications, as well as operations, seem to be dependent on the available communication technologies. Today, digital media and communication had definitively advanced from basic software to ICT. Sociology-Central in Nyam (2021) also affirms how the development of computers, for example, has increased audiences' spread and in turn made it more difficult to clearly distinguish between 'mass media' and 'non-mass' media. This expression relates to the contemporary influences of the new media upon the old 'traditional media.' The concept of 'new' applies to media technologies that have altered media classifications, with great contempt for communication characteristics of the traditional media (Aondover et al., 2022a)

Additionally, technology has advanced media communication reality. Notwithstanding, the regulatory framework is needed. The issue of the digital divide has indeed placed an extra burden on media scholars as well as professionals, and communication policymakers in developing countries. For instance, Adjei (2020) mentions how old media, i.e. newspapers, television, and radio had the concept of feeding information based on the ground research for their listeners and viewers' in places such as Ghana, where radio and television stations tailor niche agenda-driven programs of political parties.

This paper is exploratory, as it utilises the descriptive research method whereby relevant literature, documents, and records were consulted and analysed based on the existing literature to interrogate the subject matter. The paper is predominantly based on information derived from the qualitative data using secondary sources, such as relevant texts, journals, official publications, historical documents, and the Internet, which served as tangible sources of insight into the analysis. However, the inquiry is strictly limited to data found in scholarly journals, books, the Internet, and libraries, and not anecdotal sources. The method was used

to evaluate such findings with other existing literature on the subject matter. The method help findings in the works available checks the consistency of such findings, and evaluates such findings with other findings.

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Perspectives on Technology

Pate (2021) observed that where technology has been efficiently harnessed for the social, economic, and cultural wellbeing of groups and nations, a knowledge society emerges. Media technologies have always been a concern. Sometimes they were viewed from the wide-angle lens of their facilitation of development communication goals, politics and good governance, the institution of democratic culture equality, and social justice. At other times, innovations in media technologies are viewed more narrowly within particular sectors, such as particular forms of messages, scope, and nature of communication enabled. The goals in health communication and marketing communication are how to affect desired social behaviours. The concern in simplest terms is whether societies are never simple. As such, further questions are raised beneficial for which strata in society, under what conditions, and to what ends? These are the concerns evident in this paper regarding One World, One Network.

Most of the African countries are broadly classified as developing. “As rapidly as technology is developing in the rest of the world, in Africa, things have moved at a slower pace,” (Smith, 2009, p. 52). The implication is that the global media imperative may have fundamental influences, but media experiences in developing nations are lagging. In this perspective, the position of the digital dichotomy is clear. The theory offers explanations to the power of media communication landscapes, and experiences between developed (invention driven media communication environment), and developing countries (adoption driven media communication environments). This has resulted in varying rates of technology-based digital updates and a ‘global village.’ Yes, this may be a global village, but the ‘globe’ has unequal media communication digits (Aondover et al., 2022b).

It is apparent in the literature that the adoption of digital technology in journalism and other communication practices brings up long-standing debates regarding the potential of technological innovations for good and evil in society. The paper, therefore, beamed the light on contemporary manifestations of global challenges, though understandably, the Nigerian context features prominently. Still, within the context of the literature, findings are shadowed by unprecedented global occurrences; the world has been bedeviled with a range of these in recent times.

Arguably, since the 20th century, McLuhan argued that technologies help extend human capacity; media technologies have been regarded as liberating and empowering. Technologies aided human manipulation of mechanical and electronic processes in the media and communication industries. Similarly, social interactions were enhanced – extending audience reach, expanding scopes of coverage, altering the limitations of time and space, and bridging critical information gaps (Aondover et al., 2023). With these came the potential to shift the balance of power in societies as desirable in democratic societies.

As observed by Pate (2021) by adding the power of computing to mechanical and electronic innovation of the past, as done with technology, far greater is the potential of media for good or ill in 21st-century society. The networked societies are now better connected. Westernised societies are linked with those in the global south, individuals and media organisations alike are creating content. The resultant gluts of information further intensify the nature of global and social challenges

2.2 Conceptual Framework on Digital Dichotomy

Digital dichotomy simply refers to the digital divide. It is the centre of the conceptual frame of this paper. This hitherto referred to as ‘technological divide.’ As technologies have progressed into the digital phase, the divide has expanded more into a digital dimension—hence the term ‘digital divide.’ It has been the hallmark of persisting debate between developing nations and the otherwise developed ones. This is as a result of global media being a huge empire built on several years of inventions and innovations that have in turn been consistently improved upon. This technology remains dominated by the West (the large information-developed Northern hemisphere).

Therefore, Nyam (2021) is of the view that many countries have at one point or the other lamented that the technical capacity of the Western media has been abused towards information flow disorder against developing nations. This position was largely termed the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) debate. In ensuring dynamics, the international media, many of which are based in Europe and North America, as well as modern Asia are believed to have the capacity to influence the media outcomes of developing societies, mainly in Africa and South America.

Within this context, scholars like Ozuru and Ekeanyanwu (2013) remarked how communication at the international level comes with many consequences. Some of these consequences arise because of some imbalances, news manipulations, and sometimes, misrepresentation of some nations and people in the media systems of others. Corroborating this, Ciboh (2005) observed that in 1973, governments of non-aligned nations met and discussed media and information flow issues, suggesting ways to counter the real or perceived imbalance.

Based on the preceding, there is an apparent digital dichotomy. The global digital divide is not denied, except there is a feeling that it is not a very valid point that can devalue the role of digital technology in much of modern existence. The global divide describes the unequal distribution of information, and communication technologies across nations. It has become a description for the information-have, and have-nots, although, much of these positions are complex to understand. In the words of Ali (2011) argued that within academic circles it is well established that the digital divide encompasses more than physical access to D-ICTs. It is also a function of how D-ICTs are used. It is crucial to develop policies and programs that would bridge the global digital divide through D-ICTs.

For instance, former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan agrees that the digital divide is a serious issue, Annan’s successor, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, admits, and leaders of the World Bank think so too. President James Wolfensohn, former World Bank even described the divide as “one of the greatest impediments to development.” However, the significance of the digital divide has been challenged on several occasions, like Bill Gates thinking that the digital divide deserves no special attention because it is simply a symptom of economic disparity across nations, and thus the lack of access to information technologies in developing nations merely reflects the poverty level of those nations. Gates at a conference on the digital divide said “most of the world doesn’t have cars, but we don’t talk about the auto divide.” Steve Jobs, Co-founder of Apple, reiterated the views saying that the so-called “digital divide” is “just a new sticker that people use to cover up a more important word: poverty.”

In whatever point critics look at it, the significance of the digital divide becomes apt when culture, and media orientation of audience from a technology-adopting environment fail to key into the original intentions of inventors, as compared to audiences from a technology-inventive environment like the United States. Again, the digital divide becomes a more serious issue when the economic, and political policy, legal framework, and infrastructure of

developing technology-adopting nations fail to meet up with international standards, and best media-communication practices.

The essence of digital technology is what prompted the conviction that the world is “truly” global. Yet some scholars are still skeptical that the export of digital technologies has not fully bridged the gap between developed, and developing worlds, because the hitherto less developed third world has not been able to conquer attraction to media contents of the West.

III. Results and Discussion

Interrogating the Realities of Digital Dichotomy amidst One World, One Network

In the case of the developing world, most of the advanced nations are fast employing legislation towards catching up with the uses, and applications of the new media amidst, or without synergies with the traditional media. Another flashpoint is in the area of investment. Governments and the corporate, or civil society in most developing countries are yet to call to question the urgency of digital technology, let alone understand the scientific cost that is involved over time. The advanced world plays hugely as they continue to enjoy and export to the digital developing countries. Satellite technology, for example, which tends to be dependent significantly on digitisation, is constantly being maintained and researched by the developed world (BBC, 2015).

Already, the Telecommunication Development Bureau (TDB) of the International Telecommunications Union is advocating for worldwide network relative understanding, and collaboration among policymakers, and regulators. Prefer to call “disruptive” or “destabilising” technologies. Others in the developed world seem to favour the term “transformative” technologies. Thus, technology is currently being deployed in almost every facet of our most recent civilisations, and modern life context. In this perspective, complex mobile networks such as G5 are heralded along with increased technical and human operational intricacies. As such, the developing societies would need to catch up in terms of not just computational intelligence, but also perception intelligence, and cognitive intelligence.

Similarly, concerning the digital dichotomies, the adoption of ICT is seriously accelerating. The diffusion rate is rapid but also leaves more gaps and or consequences across societies with varying levels of development. As noted early, theoretical assumptions that enable sensible assumptions about contemporary media communication do exist. However, instances of proportional frame of reference to new media and communication such as Technological Determinism Theory are so far limited to understanding the spread, and influences of technology, and far less about what has, or can hinder or limit the overall benefits of D-ICTs. This is where DD-Theory fits in as a propositional frame of reference towards making improved technology and relevantly improved D-ICTs. Indeed, DD-Theory stands relevant as a new theoretical frame of reference for appraising the increasing global media-communication imperatives.

Besides, the status of technology in development is mainly accelerating and concentrated in developed wealthier nations, such as the United States, China, and European Union. New media realities in developing societies, such as media self-learning, self-controlling, and self-communication stand-alone intelligent system (Sayad, 2020) would demand rapidly improved understanding, or relative media-communication dichotomies across the world be enabled.

Entities without the same predisposing factors will often significantly vary in the adoption time of current experience(s). Adoption is not just due to capacity, but also time

lapse-effect in the spread of invention orientation, and practice. This perhaps may be the reason why Ngwainmbi (2020) concluded that a more limited form of globalization might emerge just as there is a tendency for under-developed, and developing societies to over-depend on the so-called “world superpowers” for their protection. In line with the relative conclusion, Ngwainmbi (2020) notes that the operational meaning of “superpower, advanced country”, has to be redefined by scholars, political readers, media practitioners as well as knowledge-driven policymakers.

Nyam (2021) cap it all, by saying that it is encouraging to collaborate towards improved global digital media-communication experiences. Aspect such as technological algorithmic innovations are needed at varying levels across nations, and journalism professionals, need to improve towards prevention or limiting hate speech, enhancement of fact-checking mechanisms, ethical encryption media practices among other merits. Irrespective of the ongoing advancements in network amidst digital dichotomy, such global D-ICTs conscious, and cautious collaboration can enable better learning among security operatives, digital rights literacy, and relative laws, as well as reasonable accountability from social media providers, and users.

IV. Conclusion

This paper examines the fundamental issue of digital dominance in information technologies. The paper interrogates how developing countries may, or have been left behind in the journey toward building knowledge network societies because of poor technological infrastructure, and systems. In particular, the paper examines the challenges relating to the communication, instrumentation, and monopolisation of network technologies, and the impacts of this on developing economies. This analysis rekindles the global information order of the past, such as media dominance, information inequity, asymmetrical, and imbalanced information flows. The paper proposes a new way of addressing the extant inequities and inequalities.

The paper adopted the position of Nyam (2021) and postulates the Digital Dichotomy Theory (DD-Theory), that once there are significant differences in the predisposing factors of society, there will be digital technology adoption differences that would occur. Such difference will not be just due to financial, and physical capacity, but also due to time lapse-effect in the spread of invention, orientation, and practice(s).

Again, what makes a village? The world is not truly a “global village” as regards the dictum by McLuhan, and it will be difficult to be because there will always be a digital dichotomy between entities. There exist forms of a digital dichotomy because of the following reasons: the adoption difference(s) in previous technologies; dynamism in cultural, economic, political, and religious systems of entities across the globe; the time and space lapse between invention(s) entities, and adoption entities. Mere resistance to change, change cannot be forced but persuaded.

There is a digital dichotomy that places developing societies on the side of playing catch-up, governments, and citizens must be aware, and active in the ongoing digital technological imperatives. Besides, governments in many nations still hinder, and or censor global, and local information. One world and one network may be taking undue advantage of such unfortunate dynamism of improved digital communication (Jimoh in Nyam, 2021). He argued that this is not about the future of media communication in developing nations or states, but for the overall advantageous possibilities, and convergences of the 21st century.

The paper subscribes to the call of Nyam (2021) that in a global media scenario, developing societies cannot afford to significantly lag. It is good that developing countries

with huge human and natural resources should be challenged to be on the information superhighway. This may serve better than otherwise. Also, this is expected to harvest more towards development. However, research, and training in media professionalism, and computing (programming, hard or software engineering, internet security, among others) are strongly recommended towards maximisation of the convergences, and synergies of media forms. Digital technologies depend on excellent software programming and networking.

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