Role of New Media Technology in Sustaining or Eroding the Igbo Worldview

By

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Abstract

This study examined the role of new media technology in sustaining or eroding the Igbo worldview**.** Two research questions guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population comprised all the Igbo language lecturers in federal universities in South East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The sample was 60 Igbo language lecturers selected using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. A 18-item statements/questionnaire were used to collect data for the study. The instrument was validated by two experts in Igbo language and one from Measurement and Evaluation, all from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The instrument yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.80 using Cronbach Alpha method. The results were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation. The analysis revealed that new media functions as a powerful cultural preservation tool when intentionally deployed and has also amplified Igbo visibility worldwide, allowing festivals, Igbo cuisine, dances, and music to reach millions. Another finding indicate that elders, parents, and teachers employ proverbs and gentle admonitions to transmit ethical principles such as respect, humility, diligence, and communal responsibility. The study also revealed that while new media can preserve culture, it simultaneously accelerates cultural

erosion when used without guidance. The dominance of foreign content and values aligns with cultural imperialism theory, which posits that powerful cultures impose their values through media. The study concludes that Government should support creation of Igbo-language online libraries and archives and develop youth-focused programs that balance global exposure with cultural rootedness among others.

Keywords: New media technology, Igbo worldview, sustaining Igbo worldview, eroding Igbo worldview**.**

Introduction

In the rapidly evolving global information age, new media technologies ranging from social media platforms, digital video/audio, and mobile Internet, to other forms of interactive digital communication have significantly reshaped how communities communicate, express identity, negotiate culture, and transmit values. The term "new media technology" refers broadly to digital, networked, interactive media forms, including Internet-based communication (social media platforms, blogs, digital video and audio), mobile communications (smartphones, instant messaging apps), digital television, virtual environments, and other multimedia technologies that enable the creation, sharing and consumption of content beyond traditional mass media boundaries. According to Castells (2021), in the Nigerian context, "new media" often includes social media (Facebook, TikTok, Instagram), messaging apps, digital content platforms, and digital audiovisual media (Eze, 2023). This definition aligns with what earlier scholars described as media that "combine interpersonal communication and mass media dimensions on one and the same platform," enabling interactivity, digitalization of content, and new forms of socialization. The emergence and proliferation of these media forms have profound implications for indigenous cultures and traditional worldviews.

For many African societies, including the Igbo of southeastern Nigeria, this technological shift raises urgent questions about cultural sustainability, identity preservation, and potential cultural erosion (Eze, P., & Ude, N., 2023). According to Obasi, & Onyemelukwe, (2023), "Igbo worldview" refers to the collective

cultural orientation, indigenous philosophy, social values, belief systems, cosmology, language, traditional norms and practices that shape how Igbo people perceive reality, community, spirituality, identity, and social relationships. It includes but is not limited to the moral codes, modes of communication (oral tradition, proverbs, storytelling), rituals, festivals, kinship structures, value for community and ancestors, traditional art forms, and indigenous epistemologies. In support of the above, Njemanze, (2024) asserts that the Igbo worldview which is a composite of cosmology, values, belief systems, collective memory, social norms, language, rituals, and indigenous knowledge has for centuries been transmitted largely through oral tradition, communal gatherings, rites, customary practices, proverbs, folklore, and lived social relations. According to Okoye, & Nwosu, (2022), the arrival and growing dominance of digital media present both opportunities and challenges to this heritage. On one hand, digital platforms can serve as means of documenting, revitalizing, and disseminating Igbo indigenous knowledge to wider audiences; on the other hand, exposure to globalized media content may lead to displacement, transformation, or even loss of traditional values, beliefs, and practices.

This dual potential to sustain or erode lies at the heart of contemporary debates about culture, globalization, identity, and media. Sustaining here means the capacity of new media to preserve, revitalize, promote or strengthen aspects of the Igbo worldview (language, customs, identity, traditions) through documentation, dissemination, content creation, community-building, and cultural revival online. Uzuegbu, (2016) and Zuckerman, (2021), asserts that "sustaining" implies that new media technology helps preserve, revitalize or reinforce Igbo cultural heritage, through documentation of oral history, promotion of indigenous languages, dissemination of traditional music/dance/rituals, virtual communities that celebrate Igbo identity, and digital archives of folklore/traditions. On the other hand, eroding (or transforming) is the process by which new media contributes to weakening, dilution, loss, or transformation of core aspects of the Igbo worldview, shifts in values, loss of language use, adoption of foreign cultural norms, weakening of traditional practices. Uwalaka, (2018) noted that through adoption of foreign cultural norms, there is decline of traditional practices, language shift or loss, identity confusion among youths, and replacing communal/indigenous worldviews with globalized or Western-oriented ones. Williams (2024) work on

media globalization and digital media in Africa highlight that digital media and globalization often exert strong influences on traditional cultures, leading to cultural homogenization, value shifts, and erosion of indigenous cultural identity. At the same time, Anderson (2020) and Njemanze, (2024) noted that there is growing literature that sees new media as potential tools for cultural preservation and revitalization. For instance, the authors of a recent study like Adegbija (2021) argue that digital media tools can foster promotion of indigenous communication systems, increased visibility, and community-driven representation of local cultures. Adegbija illustrated representation of the Igbo People and Culture in the New Media Era showing different aspect of Igbo Life & Culture, before New Media (Traditional Igbo Society), positive changes through New Media and negative Impacts / Emerging Challenges. This is shown below:

1. Communication & Expression: Oral communication were done through Ikoro, folktales, proverbs, market meetings, and communal gatherings, but with the new media, there is broader reach; Igbo voices now are heard globally through podcasts, videos, and digital discussions; oral wisdom archived online. However, the challenge is that there are loss of depth and context; proverb use declining; shallow online conversations; disrespectful tone toward elders.

2. Language and Proverbs: Igbo language was sacred, poetic, and richly symbolic and are used in greetings, storytelling, and rituals. The creation of Igbo language apps, YouTube lessons, and online language forums; improved global access, however, there is code-mixing and language dilution as youths prefer English for online prestige; tonal purity fading.

3. Storytelling & Oral Tradition- Folktales told under the moonlight (akụkọ ifo), teaching morals and worldview. Online storytelling revives folklore through animations and short films; diaspora youths rediscover cultural roots. Moral lessons often lost; stories commercialized; sacred tales trivialized as comic skits.

4. Festivals & Ceremonies: Celebrated communally like New Yam, Ofala, Mmanwu, and marriage rites with symbolic depth. Livestreaming promotes cultural tourism and global awareness; digital preservation of events.

Commodification and misrepresentation of rituals; sacred dances turned into mere entertainment.

5. Religion & Spirituality: Deep reverence for Chukwu, ancestors, and Ala; rituals performed with moral purity. Renewed interest in indigenous spirituality through digital forums; global recognition of Igbo cosmology. Syncretism and distortion of rituals online; fake "traditional priests" exploiting followers on social media.

6. Family & Kinship (Umunna): Strong communal ties; decisions made through consensus in physical meetings.Virtual family groups on WhatsApp and Facebook reconnect diaspora families. Digital distance replacing physical presence; conflicts arise from online gossip and misinformation.

7. Youth Culture & Identity: Youths trained in family trade, discipline, and communal responsibility. Digital innovation among Igbo youths; new generation of creative artists, influencers, and entrepreneurs. Rise of materialism and moral laxity; imitation of Western lifestyles; decline in humility and respect.

8. Igbo News & Media Representation: Local radio and town criers conveyed news guided by communal ethics. Igbo-language news channels, blogs, and podcasts increase information flow and civic engagement. Fake news, sensationalism, and ethnic stereotyping; loss of objectivity and cultural decorum.

9. Image of the Igbo in Global Media: Perceived as industrious, communal, and proud of culture within Africa. Improved visibility of Igbo excellence, innovators, scholars, and creatives showcased globally. Misrepresentation in global platforms as materialistic or comic; cultural complexity reduced to stereotypes.

10. Dress, Art & Aesthetics Traditional attires (Isiagu, George, Akwa ocha) and crafts used to express dignity and identity. Global fashion adaptations; cultural pride through online showcases and cultural influences. Cultural attire commercialized; authenticity lost in mass production and western reinterpretation.

11. Music & Performance: Drums, flutes, and Ogene reflected community values and storytelling. Fusion of traditional rhythms with Afrobeats; global recognition of Igbo music. Oversexualization and commercialization; loss of moral or spiritual message.

12. Gender Roles & Representation: Clear social roles rooted in respect and complementarity between men and women.Women now use digital spaces to advocate for equality, education, and empowerment. Cultural values of modesty eroded; online vulgarity and gender conflict replacing balance.

13. Education & Knowledge Transmission: Apprenticeship, oral mentorship, and moral training under elders. Online education, digital libraries, and cultural webinars promote knowledge democratization. Shallow learning and lack of mentorship; dependence on unverified online information.

14. Cultural Preservation & Archiving: Preservation through oral memory and community rituals. Digitization of folktales, proverbs, songs, and artifacts; increased access for global researchers. Risk of data loss, intellectual property theft, and cultural appropriation by outsiders.

15. Community Leadership & Governance: Elders' councils, age grades, and titled men (Nze na Ozo) managed social order. Social media encourages civic engagement and accountability in leadership. Online abuse of traditional leaders; loss of respect for institutions; fake titles circulating online.

16. Economic Enterprise (Aku Luo Uno): Local trade, apprenticeship, and ethical wealth creation. E-commerce expands Igbo entrepreneurship globally; digital marketing empowers youth businesses. Fraudulent online schemes and get-rich-quick mentality; diminishing moral responsibility.

17. Humour & Satire: Used wisely in folktales and moonlight plays to teach wisdom. Social media comedy popularizes Igbo wit and creativity. Vulgarized humour, mockery of sacred traditions, and cultural trivialization.

18. Political Identity & Unity: United communal voice through councils and town unions. Online campaigns raise Igbo political awareness and diaspora involvement. Division, misinformation, and online tribal conflicts; echo chambers fuel disunity.

19. Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer: Elders trained youths through apprenticeship and proverb instruction. Digital mentorship platforms reconnect elders and diaspora youths. Youths often disregard elders' counsel; overdependence on global trends.

20. Moral Values & Ethics (Omenala na Omenani) Rooted in truth (ofo na ogu), respect, and communal responsibility. Online campaigns promote charity, solidarity, and moral revival. Moral decay from global media influence; emphasis on fame, not integrity.

Owing to the positive changes and negative impact of New Media on Igbo worldview as seen above, this study tends to investigates this tension within the Igbo context: to find out ways the use of new media technology contribute to the sustaining of the Igbo worldview, and ways it contribute to its erosion or transformation

Statement of the Problem

The rapid integration of new media technology into everyday life has dramatically altered how cultural values and worldviews are transmitted, learned, and practiced. Among the Igbo people of Nigeria, whose cultural heritage has traditionally relied on oral tradition, communal interactions, rituals, proverbs, and symbolic practices, the rise of digital communication poses both opportunities and significant threats. While new media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram have the potential to serve as modern channels for documenting, teaching, and promoting Igbo cultural values, they have simultaneously become spaces where foreign ideologies, lifestyles, and moral codes are consumed at unprecedented rates. This paradox creates a cultural tension: the same media that can sustain the Igbo worldview may inadvertently contribute to its erosion. In recent years, scholars have observed a declining level

of interest among Igbo youths in traditional customs, indigenous language, communal practices, and ancestral values. The dominance of Western content, global entertainment, and digital celebrities has increasingly shaped youth identity, often overshadowing indigenous cultural consciousness. Traditional Igbo practice such as respect for elders, communal solidarity (igwebuike), traditional rites of passage, indigenous dressing patterns, and the centrality of the Igbo language are gradually losing visibility and relevance among youths who now model their identities after global trends widely circulated through new media technologies. Despite these concerns, there is limited empirical research on how new media specifically influences either the sustainability or erosion of the Igbo worldview. This gap becomes even more critical in a context where schools have not fully adapted to the demands of digital cultural education. Many educational institutions fail to integrate Igbo cultural content into digital learning platforms, leaving young learners to navigate digital spaces without guidance, often resulting in unfiltered exposure to foreign cultural influences. Without deliberate efforts from the education sector, new media continues to shape the worldview of Igbo youths in uncontrolled ways that may compromise cultural continuity. Therefore, the problem this study seeks to address is the uncertain and contested role of new media technology in shaping the Igbo worldview, whether it sustains cultural identity through digital preservation and cultural promotion, or erodes it through cultural displacement, value distortion, and diminished relevance of indigenous knowledge.

Research Questions

Based on the foregoing, the study is guided by the following core research questions:

1. In what ways does the use of new media technology contribute to the sustaining of the Igbo worldview?
2. In what ways does the use of new media technology contribute to the erosion of the Igbo worldview?

Methods

The researchers adopted a descriptive survey research design for the study. According to Nworgu (2015), a descriptive survey research design is concerned with obtaining data on particular features of a given population in a systematic

manner that the findings are expected to be generalized to the entire population. This, design was chosen as the data collected were generalized to the entire population. Purposive sampling technique was used to draw 98 Igbo language lecturers for the study.

The researchers developed a 16-item questionnaire to obtain relevant information for the study. The instrument was structured on a stratified 4-point likert scale which the respondents reacted to. The questionnaire was weighted as follows: Strongly Agree (SD), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD), with 4, 3, 2 and 1points respectively. The criterion mean was 2.50. The instrument was validated by two experts in Language Education and another in Measurement and Evaluation, all from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The instrument yielded a reliability co-efficient of 0.80 using Cronbach Alpha method which showed that the instrument was reliable. A total of 60 copies of the instrument was administered and retrieved. The data was analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation. Any item with a mean of 2.50 and above was accepted value whereas, item with a mean rating below 2.50 was not accepted.

Results

Research Question 1: In what ways does the use of new media technology contribute to the sustaining of the Igbo worldview?

Table 1: Means and Standard deviation of the Igbo language lecturers on ways the use of new media technology contributes to the sustaining of the Igbo worldview.

N = 60

S/N	Item Statements	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1	New media enhances the visibility and use of the Igbo language, especially among youths.	2.60	0.71	Accepted
2	Digital platforms support the preservation of Igbo oral traditions, including proverbs, folktales, songs, and historical narratives.	2.80	0.71	Accepted
3	New media strengthens Igbo communal consciousness and identity by linking Igbo people across geographical boundaries.	2.90	0.74	Accepted

4	Social media encourages cultural pride and reawakening among young Igbo users.	2.62	0.71	Accepted
5	Digital spaces provide avenues for intergenerational transmission of Igbo values and indigenous knowledge.	3.00	0.71	Accepted
6	New media facilitates digital archiving of Igbo cultural heritage.	2.76	0.71	Accepted
7	.Exposure to Igbo cultural content on new media motivates young people to learn and speak the Igbo language.	3.00	0.71	Accepted
8	Through blogs, podcasts, and videos, new media enables elders and scholars to pass down Igbo worldview perspectives.	3.00	0.71	Accepted
	Grand mean	**2.72**	**0.67**	**Accepted**

Table 1 showed the responses of the Igbo language lecturers on ways the use of new media technology contributes to the sustaining of the Igbo worldview. Table 1 revealed that the 8 items listed and their average 2.72 is above the criterion mean of 2.50. Based on the findings, it was established that, the above items are all ways the use of new media technology contribute to the sustaining of the Igbo worldview**.**

Research Question 2

In what ways does the use of new media technology contribute to the erosion of the Igbo worldview?

Table 2: Mean responses of Igbo language lecturers on the ways the use of new media technology contributes to the erosion of the Igbo worldview.

S/N	Item statements	Mean	Std	Decision
9	Excessive exposure to foreign content on new media weakens young people's attachment to Igbo cultural values.	2.89	0.75	Agreed

10	The dominance of English and other global languages on new media reduces the use of the Igbo language online.	2.74	0.65	Agreed
11	New media encourages cultural imitation that undermines traditional Igbo beliefs and moral systems.	2.81	0.66	Agreed
12	The informal language style used on social media negatively affects the proper use of Igbo language structures.	2.79	0.71	Agreed
13	New media promotes individualism, which conflicts with the communal values central to the Igbo worldview.	2.65	0.59	Agreed
14	Constant engagement with global popular culture through new media diminishes respect for Igbo traditions and customs.	2.72	0.50	Agreed
15	New media platforms expose youths to lifestyles that contradict Igbo moral and ethical standards.	2.75	0.72	Agreed
16	The rapid spread of misinformation on new media distorts authentic Igbo cultural knowledge.	2.85	0.64	Agreed

Grand mean = 2.72

Table 2 identified ways use of new media technology contribute to the erosion of the Igbo worldview. Table 2 indicates that items 9- 18 with a cluster mean of 2.81 were all above the criterion level of 2.50. This shows that the above items identified are all ways use of new media technology contribute to the erosion of the Igbo worldview.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study show that new media functions as a powerful cultural preservation tool when intentionally deployed and new media has also amplified Igbo visibility worldwide, allowing festivals, Igbo cuisine, dances, and music to reach millions. The above findings are in line with the findings of Adegbija (2021) and Okonkwo (2021) who argues that digital media revitalizes African indigenous languages by increasing functional domains and Ndimele & Ukaegbu (2020) who assert that online platforms enhance indigenous identity formation and cultural sustainability. One can conclude that this result supports the view that indigenous cultures can survive globalization by digitally negotiating space, rather than resisting technology outright. The Igbo experience reflects a broader African trend where digital media serves as both an archive and a stage for cultural performance.

Another finding revealed that while new media can preserve culture, it simultaneously accelerates cultural erosion when used without guidance. The dominance of foreign content and values aligns with cultural imperialism theory, which posits that powerful cultures impose their values through media. The findings is in line with the work of Oha, N. (2021) and Kress, (2021) who emphasizes that language loss through media leads to worldview erosion and Okigbo & Eze (2022) who report that social media negatively affects indigenous value systems in Nigeria. For the Igbo worldview, this manifests in declining language proficiency, weakened moral norms, and reduced respect for tradition. The erosion is particularly evident among young people who consume global content uncritically. Without deliberate educational intervention, new media becomes a vehicle for cultural dilution rather than empowerment.

Recommendations

Based on the forgoing, the researchers recommended as follows:

1. Schools should integrate Igbo digital cultural studies into the curriculum.
2. Teachers should incorporate digital storytelling in Igbo language instruction.
3. The Ministry of Education should sponsor development of Igbo cultural apps and e-learning materials.
4. Digital literacy training should emphasize cultural preservation.
5. Schools should establish digital cultural heritage clubs.
6. Universities should develop courses on indigenous knowledge and new media.

7. Government should support creation of Igbo-language online libraries and archives.
8. Educators should partner with ICT firms to produce culturally sensitive online content.
9. Parents should be trained in digital parenting to guide youths' online cultural exposure.
10. Scholarship schemes should support research on Igbo culture and digital technology.
11. Fund research on indigenous knowledge digitization.
12. Develop youth-focused programs that balance global exposure with cultural rootedness.

Conclusion

In the digital marketplace of the twenty-first century, the Igbo drumbeat still sounds but sometimes faintly, sometimes frantically. The challenge is not that technology has arrived, but that it often speaks louder than tradition. Yet the Igbo are a people of reinvention. They turned colonial schools into engines of success, market stalls into empires, and adversity into artistry. Surely, they can also turn new media into a new ọfọ, a symbol of truth and continuity. If the Igbo worldview is to endure, it must not merely survive online; it must speak online, dance online, reason online, and teach online with dignity and depth. The ancestors spoke through drums and fire; their descendants can speak through screens and fiber. This study therefore concludes that new media represents a double-edged sword in the sustenance of the Igbo worldview. While it provides unprecedented opportunities for cultural preservation, revitalization, and global visibility, it simultaneously poses serious threats to linguistic competence, moral values, and indigenous identity when left unchecked. The survival of the Igbo worldview in a globalized digital era therefore depends not on rejecting new media, but on strategically appropriating it through education, policy, and cultural consciousness. Education remains the most powerful tool for ensuring that new media becomes a bridge for cultural continuity rather than a pathway to cultural extinction.

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