UTILISING DIGITAL MEDIA TOOLS TO FOSTER INDIGENOUS COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS IN NIGERIA

Chigozi Eke[1]* & Muideen Opeyemi Adeyemi[2]

[1,2]Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

*chigozi_eke@uniport.edu.ng

ABSTRACT: This study identified the digital media tools as channels for fostering indigenous communication systems in Nigeria. The theoretical framework of the study was drawn from cultural modernisation theory and media technological determinism theory. The study employs a comprehensive literature review to explore how digital media tools can foster indigenous communication systems in Nigeria (desk review). This method involved a literature review or secondary data analysis, involves the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of existing research, reports, publications, and other relevant documents. Findings from the study revealed that while these traditional forms of communication remain vital within communities, particularly in rural areas, their representation on digital media platforms is still limited and often misrepresented. The digital divide and dominance of Western-centric content have contributed to the underrepresentation and potential dilution of Nigeria's rich cultural heritage online. The study concluded that while traditional forms of communication continue to play a crucial role in fostering communal interactions, especially in rural areas, their presence on digital media platforms is sparse and often inaccurately portrayed, risking the loss of authenticity and cultural significance. The study recommended that digital media platforms have to collaborate with cultural custodians to ensure accurate representation and amplification of indigenous communication systems in the digital space

Keywords: Digital, Media Tools, Indigenous, Communication, Systems, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The advent of digital media has revolutionised communication systems worldwide, including in Nigeria, where traditional communication systems have coexisted with modern digital tools. Indigenous communication systems in Nigeria, which include orality, folklore, proverbs, and other forms of cultural expression, have historically played crucial roles in transmitting cultural values, social norms, and community cohesion. However, the rise of digital media tools presents both challenges and opportunities for these indigenous systems. As modern communication channels dominate, there is a growing concern that indigenous forms of communication may be marginalised. This study explores how digital media tools can be harnessed to foster and sustain indigenous communication systems in Nigeria, ensuring that they remain relevant in the digital age. Indigenous communication systems are deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups. These systems include storytelling, songs, dance, and rituals, which have been used for centuries to convey messages, educate, and entertain. According to Akinyemi (2023), these traditional forms of communication concern not only the transmission of information but also about the preservation of cultural identity and continuity. As such, the integration of these systems into

modern digital platforms is crucial for their survival and evolution in a rapidly changing world.

The rapid adoptions of digital media in Nigeria have transformed the way people communicate, access information, and engage with their cultural heritage. The proliferation of smartphones, social media platforms, and internet connectivity has opened up new avenues for the dissemination of indigenous knowledge and practices. As Ojo (2022) noted, digital media tools offer a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between traditional and modern communication systems by enabling the preservation and promotion of indigenous cultures in a globalised world. Despite the potential benefits, the integration of indigenous communication systems into digital platforms is fraught with challenges. One of the key issues is the digital divide, which refers to unequal access to digital technologies across different regions and communities in Nigeria. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2022), rural areas in Nigeria continue to lag behind urban centres in terms of internet penetration and digital literacy. This disparity poses a significant obstacle to the widespread adoption of digital media tools for fostering indigenous communication systems.

Moreover, the dominance of Western cultural content on digital platforms raises concerns about cultural homogenisation and the erosion of indigenous knowledge systems. Ndubuisi (2023) noted that the global nature of digital media means that indigenous cultures are often overshadowed by dominant Western narratives. This situation underscores the need for deliberate efforts to create and promote digital content that reflects and celebrates Nigeria's rich cultural diversity. In response to these challenges, various initiatives aimed at promoting indigenous communication systems through digital media have been developed. For example, platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook have been used to share traditional stories, songs, and cultural practices with a wider audience. Additionally, mobile apps and websites dedicated to indigenous languages and cultural education have been developed to facilitate the learning and preservation of these languages. According to Adebanjo (2023), these initiatives demonstrate the potential of digital media to serve as a powerful tool for cultural preservation and promotion.

Additionally, the role of social media influencers and content creators in promoting indigenous communication systems cannot be overlooked. These individuals have leveraged their platforms to showcase Nigerian culture, traditions, and languages to a global audience. As highlighted by Adetunji (2023), social media influencers play a crucial role in shaping cultural narratives and fostering a sense of pride and identity among younger generations. The use of digital media to promote indigenous communication systems also has implications for education and cultural transmission. Educational institutions in Nigeria have begun incorporating digital tools into their curriculum to teach students about their cultural heritage. For example, the use of digital storytelling and interactive media in classrooms has been shown to enhance students' understanding and appreciation of indigenous cultures (Eze, 2022). This approach not only makes learning more engaging but also ensures that cultural knowledge is passed down to future generations.

Another important aspect of fostering indigenous communication systems through digital media is the role of the government and policy makers. Government policies that support the creation and dissemination of indigenous content on digital platforms are essential for the success of these efforts. According to Bello (2023), the Nigerian government is responsible for creating an enabling environment for the promotion of indigenous cultures through digital

media. This includes providing funding for cultural initiatives, supporting digital literacy programs, and ensuring that digital platforms are accessible to all Nigerians. In addition to government support, collaboration between cultural institutions, NGOs, and the private sector is crucial for the success of digital initiatives aimed at promoting indigenous communication systems. Partnerships between these stakeholders can lead to the development of innovative digital solutions that cater to the needs of different communities. For instance, collaboration between cultural organisations and tech companies can result in the creation of mobile apps and websites that facilitate the learning and preservation of indigenous languages (Oluwole, 2023).

The preservation of indigenous communication systems through digital media also has significant implications for social cohesion and national unity. Nigeria is a multiethnic and multilingual country, and the promotion of indigenous cultures through digital platforms can help foster a sense of belonging and identity among different ethnic groups. As noted by Chika (2022), digital media tools can be used to bridge cultural divides and promote understanding and tolerance among Nigeria's diverse populations. Moreover, the economic potential of leveraging digital media to promote indigenous communication systems should not be underestimated. The global demand for cultural products and experiences presents a lucrative opportunity for Nigerian content creators and entrepreneurs. By tapping into this market, they can create and monetise digital content that showcases Nigeria's rich cultural heritage. According to Uche (2023), the creative economy, driven by digital media, has the potential to contribute significantly to Nigeria's GDP and create employment opportunities for young people.

However, for these opportunities to be fully realised, addressing the challenges associated with digital media use in promoting indigenous communication systems is essential. This includes issues such as intellectual property rights, the digital divide, and the need for culturally sensitive content creation. As emphasised by Okafor (2023), it is important to ensuring that creators of indigenous content are adequately compensated for their work and that their intellectual property is protected from exploitation is important. The integration of indigenous communication systems into digital media platforms represents a significant opportunity for cultural preservation, education, and economic development in Nigeria. While challenges such as the digital divide and cultural homogenisation exist, the potential benefits of using digital media to promote indigenous cultures are immense. Through strategic collaboration between the government, cultural institutions, and the private sector, digital media can serve as a powerful tool for fostering indigenous communication systems in Nigeria.

The utilisation of digital media tools to foster indigenous communication systems has garnered significant global attention due to the increasing role of technology in preserving cultural heritage. Globally, many nations are employing digital platforms to revitalise and promote their indigenous languages and communication forms. For example, social media and mobile applications have been developed to teach and communicate in indigenous languages in countries such as New Zealand, with platforms like 'Te Aka,' which helps preserve the Māori language (Ka'ai, 2022). Similarly, digital archives and cultural documentation projects have been initiated in the United States and Canada to preserve Native American languages. In Nigeria, a country with over 500 languages, the urgency to leverage digital tools for indigenous communication is even more pronounced due to the rapid decline of local languages in the face of global communication systems (Ojebuyi &

Salawu, 2023). The expansion of digital platforms such as YouTube, podcasts, and mobile apps presents opportunities for communities to document, share, and educate future generations about their indigenous languages and traditional communication forms.

In Nigeria, the growing use of platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and indigenous YouTube channels has enabled communities to sustain their local languages and cultural heritage in the digital age. For instance, the Igbo people have adopted the 'Igbo Calendar App' to preserve their traditional system of timekeeping and important cultural dates (Okafor & Uzochukwu, 2023). Furthermore, the Yoruba language has gained visibility through digital media, with platforms like BBC Yoruba providing news and storytelling content in the language, thus reinforcing its usage among younger generations (Olagunju, 2023). Such initiatives demonstrate that digital media tools are crucial for the survival of indigenous communication systems in Nigeria, as they enable local cultures to thrive in an increasingly globalised world.

Media influence on communication in Nigeria can be observed in various sectors such as politics, education, and cultural discourse. Social media platforms like Twitter and WhatsApp have become significant channels for public dialogue, political mobilisation, and social activism, as seen during the #EndSARS protests where youths utilised these platforms to demand justice and reform. Additionally, traditional media like television and radio continue to shape public opinion, particularly in rural areas where access to digital platforms is limited. For instance, radio stations such as Wazobia FM provide localised content in indigenous languages, enhancing communication among the masses. The growing influence of digital platforms has also transformed political communication, with politicians leveraging these tools for campaign strategies and governance (Nwabueze & Obiora, 2023). This study further explores the strategies and initiatives that can be employed to achieve this goal, with the aim of contributing to the sustainable development of Nigeria's cultural heritage in the digital age.

Statement of the problem

The rapid rise of digital media has profoundly transformed communication landscapes across Nigeria, yet indigenous communication systems remain largely underutilised and undervalued in this digital revolution. Traditional forms of communication, which have historically served as the bedrock of cultural identity and social cohesion, are increasingly at risk of being marginalised as modern digital tools dominate the media space. Despite the potential for digital platforms to preserve and promote Nigeria's rich cultural heritage, there is a noticeable gap in the integration of indigenous communication systems into these new media channels. This situation is exacerbated by the overwhelming presence of Western cultural content on digital platforms, which often overshadows local narratives and indigenous knowledge systems. As a result, there is growing concern that the erosion of these indigenous communication practices could lead to the loss of cultural diversity and identity in Nigeria. Furthermore, the digital divide, particularly in rural areas, continues to hinder the widespread adoption of digital tools for fostering indigenous communication, leaving a significant portion of the population disconnected from their cultural roots.

The lack of strategic efforts to harness digital media for the promotion of indigenous communication systems highlights a critical gap in both policy and practice. Without deliberate and coordinated initiatives, there is a risk that these traditional forms of communication may become obsolete, further deepening the cultural disconnect among

younger generations who are more inclined towards globalised media content. This disconnect poses a threat not only to cultural preservation but also to the social cohesion and unity of Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups. Therefore, this study seeks to address the pressing issue of how digital media tools can be effectively utilised to foster and sustain indigenous communication systems in Nigeria. By exploring the challenges and opportunities associated with this integration, this study aims to contribute to the development of strategies that will ensure the continued relevance and vitality of Nigeria's cultural heritage in the digital age.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aims to critically analyse the role of digital media tools in preserving and promoting indigenous communication systems in Nigeria, identifying challenges and proposing strategic solutions. The objectives are as follows:

1. examines the current state of indigenous communication systems in Nigeria and their representation on digital media platforms.
2. explored the challenges hindering the integration of indigenous communication systems into digital media.
3. identify the opportunities provided by digital media tools for promoting and preserving indigenous communication systems in Nigeria.
4. proposes strategies for enhancing the use of digital media in fostering indigenous communication systems in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the current state of indigenous communication systems in Nigeria, and how are they represented on digital media platforms?
2. What are the key challenges hindering the integration of indigenous communication systems into digital media?
3. What opportunities do digital media tools offer for promoting and preserving indigenous communication systems in Nigeria?
4. What strategies can be proposed to enhance the use of digital media in fostering indigenous communication systems in Nigeria?

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Indigenous Communication Systems in Nigeria

This subhead explores the traditional forms of communication in Nigeria, including their historical significance, cultural roles, and current status. Indigenous communication systems in Nigeria are deeply rooted in the nation's cultural heritage and are reflective of the rich diversity of its over 250 ethnic groups. These systems include various forms of traditional media, such as oral traditions, folklore, proverbs, festivals, and the use of symbols and artefacts. These modes of communication serve as vehicles for transmitting cultural values, social norms, and communal knowledge across generations. According to Okonkwo (2023), indigenous communication systems play a crucial role in maintaining social cohesion and reinforcing community identity within Nigerian societies. However, with the advent of

globalisation and the dominance of Western communication forms, these traditional gradual eroded have. This erosion poses a significant threat to the cultural identity and continuity of Nigeria's indigenous communities.

Digital Media as a Tool for Cultural Preservation

This section examines the potential of digital media platforms to preserve and promote indigenous cultures and communication systems. Digital media offer unprecedented opportunities for the preservation and promotion of indigenous cultures in Nigeria. The integration of digital platforms such as social media, websites, and mobile applications into cultural preservation efforts enables the documentation, dissemination, and revitalisation of traditional practices and knowledge systems. For instance, digital archives and online repositories allow for the storage of oral histories, languages, and cultural artefacts, making them accessible to a global audience (Adebanjo & Olukoya, 2023). Additionally, digital storytelling has emerged as a powerful tool for engaging younger generations with their cultural heritage in ways that resonate with their digital experiences. The use of digital media in this context not only helps to preserve indigenous cultures but also facilitates intercultural dialogue and understanding in an increasingly interconnected world.

Challenges in Integrating Indigenous Communication with Digital Media

This subhead discusses the barriers and challenges faced in incorporating traditional communication systems into digital platforms, such as the digital divide and cultural homogenisation. Despite the potential benefits, integrating indigenous communication systems with digital media presents several challenges. One of the primary challenges is the digital divide, which limits access to digital tools and resources, particularly in rural and underserved communities in Nigeria. This gap exacerbates the risk of marginalisation of indigenous knowledge and practices that are not documented or shared digitally (Obi, 2024). Additionally, the commercialisation of digital platforms often prioritises content that appeals to a global audience, which can lead to the commodification and misrepresentation of indigenous cultures. Another challenge is the potential loss of context and meaning when traditional practices are translated into digital formats, which may dilute the authenticity of the original forms communication. Addressing these challenges requires a nuanced approach that balances the preservation of cultural integrity with the need for adaptation to modern communication technologies.

Strategies for Enhancing Indigenous Communication through Digital Media

This section focuses on potential strategies and best practices for leveraging digital media to strengthen and sustain indigenous communication systems in Nigeria. To enhance indigenous communication through digital media, several strategies can be employed. First, there is a need for collaborative efforts between indigenous communities, cultural organisations, and technology experts to develop digital platforms that are culturally sensitive and community driven. Such platforms should prioritise the representation of indigenous voices and ensure that cultural practices are accurately documented and shared (Eze & Ibrahim, 2024). Second, capacity-building initiatives aimed at improving digital literacy within indigenous communities are essential to empower them to actively participate in the digital preservation of their cultural heritage. Finally, policies that support the protection of intellectual property rights related to indigenous knowledge and cultural expressions must be enforced to prevent

exploitation and ensure that the benefits of digital preservation efforts are equitably shared. These strategies, when effectively implemented, can bridge the gap between traditional and modern communication systems, fostering a more inclusive and culturally diverse digital landscape (Eze & Ibrahim, 2024).

Theoretical Review

Cultural Modernisation Theory

Cultural modernisation theory is a concept within the broader framework of modernisation theory, which suggests that economic development leads to profound shifts in societal values and cultural norms. The theory was developed primarily by the political scientist Ronald Inglehart in the early 1970s. Inglehart argued that as societies experience economic growth and stability, there is a gradual shift from traditional values, which emphasise survival, security, and conformity, to modern values, which prioritise self-expression, individualism, and quality of life. This shift is driven by generational change, as younger generations who grow up in conditions of relative economic security adopt postmaterialist values that reflect their aspirations for autonomy and self-fulfilment (Inglehart, 1977).

The main tenet of cultural modernisation theory is that economic development leads to predictable and uniform cultural changes across different societies. One key assumption is that these changes are largely irreversible and follow a linear progression, with societies becoming increasingly secular, rational, and democratic as they modernise. However, the theory has been criticised for its deterministic and Eurocentric outlook. Critics argue that it oversimplifies the complex relationship between economic development and cultural change, ignoring the role of historical, political, and social factors. Moreover, the theory tends to generalise Western experiences of modernisation as a universal model, thereby neglecting the diversity of cultural responses to modernisation in non-Western contexts (Welzel & Inglehart, 2005). This theory examines how technological advancements, such as digital media, influence cultural practices and communication systems. This study is relevant because it helps to analyse how the integration of digital tools can either support or undermine indigenous communication systems in the face of modernisation.

Media Technological Determinism Theory

Media technological determinism is a theory that suggests that the development of media technology directly shapes and determines the structure of society and cultural values. The theory was most notably propounded by the Canadian media scholar Marshall McLuhan in 1964. McLuhan famously coined the phrase "the medium is the message," highlighting his belief that the characteristics of a medium—rather than its content—have a profound impact on human consciousness and societal organisation. According to this theory, technological advancements in communication media, from the printing press to the internet, are seen as the driving forces behind major social and cultural changes.

The primary tenet of media technological determinism is that technological innovations, particularly in communication media, are the primary agents of social and cultural change. This theory assumes that each new media technology reshapes human interactions and societal structures in a predictable way, leading to a linear progression of historical development (Postman, 2000). However, the theory has faced significant criticism. Critics

argue that it oversimplifies the relationship between technology and society by attributing too much power to technology while downplaying human agency and the role of social, economic, and political factors. Additionally, the theory is criticised for its deterministic nature, implying that technological change is inevitable and uncontrollable, which neglects the potential for human intervention and resistance to technological impacts (Williams, 2003). This theory posits that technology shapes society and influences cultural change. The context of this study can be used to explore how digital media technologies drive changes in communication practices and whether they are enabling or challenging the preservation and promotion of indigenous communication systems in Nigeria.

Empirical Review

Akinyemi (2021) carried out a study on "Indigenous Communication Systems and the Digital Age: An Analysis of Representation on Social Media." The study assessed the presence and representation of indigenous communication systems on various social media platforms in Nigeria. The research employed content analysis of social media platforms, focusing on posts, videos, and blogs related to indigenous communication systems. The study revealed that indigenous communication systems are underrepresented on social media, with limited content focused on traditional forms of communication. However, interest among young content creators in showcasing their cultural heritage online has increased. The reviewed study and the present study are both connected as they hinge on indigenous communication system and digital media. but whereas the reviewed study centred on indigenous communication systems and the digital age: an analysis of representation on social media, the present study centres on utilising digital media tools to foster indigenous communication systems in Nigeria. The difference is on the objectives, scope and methods.

Ndubuisi (2020) conducted a research on "Barriers to the Digital Integration of Indigenous Communication in Nigeria." This study identified and analysed the key challenges that impede the integration of indigenous communication systems into digital media platforms in Nigeria. A mixed-method approach was used, combining surveys of digital media practitioners with interviews with cultural experts. The research identified several barriers, including the digital divide, lack of digital literacy, cultural homogenisation, and insufficient funding for digital content creation. The study highlighted the need for more inclusive policies and educational programmes. The current study and the pioneer study are both related as they focus on digital integration of indigenous communication in Nigeria. Whereas the reviewed study hinged on barriers to the digital integration of indigenous communication in Nigeria, the pioneer study hinges on utilising digital media tools to foster indigenous communication systems in Nigeria. The area of divergence is on the objective, scope and methodological approach.

Adebanjo, (2022) did a paper on "Opportunities in Digital Media for the Preservation of Indigenous Communication in Nigeria." The study explored the opportunities offered by digital media platforms for the preservation and promotion of Nigeria's indigenous communication systems. The study utilised a qualitative approach and conducted interviews with digital media experts, cultural practitioners, and social media influencers involved in promoting indigenous cultures. The findings revealed that digital media provides vast opportunities for cultural preservation, including broader audience reach, interactive engagement, and innovative content formats. However, it also emphasised the need for culturally sensitive content and strategic content creation. The reviewed study and the present

study are related as both studies centre on digital media and indigenous communication system. Whereas the reviewed study focused on opportunities in digital media for the preservation of indigenous communication in Nigeria, the present study focuses on utilising digital media tools to foster indigenous communication systems in Nigeria. But differ in the area of objectives, scope and methods.

Ojo (2021) conducted a paper on "Strategies for Promoting Indigenous Communication through Digital Platforms in Nigeria." This study aimed to develop strategies that could be implemented to effectively utilise digital media tools for the promotion and sustainability of indigenous communication systems in Nigeria. The study employed a policy analysis approach, reviewed existing digital media policies and case studies of successful digital cultural initiatives, and conducted expert panel discussions. The research proposed several strategies, including government-led digital literacy programs, the creation of indigenous content hubs, partnerships between tech companies and cultural organisations, and the use of incentives to encourage content creation in indigenous languages. The reviewed study and the current study are related as they focus on the indigenous communication and digital media. Whereas the reviewed study centred on strategies for promoting indigenous communication through digital platforms in Nigeria, the current study centres on utilising digital media tools to foster indigenous communication systems in Nigeria. The difference is on objectives, scope and methodology.

Methodology

The methodology for this study, which focuses on the role of digital media tools in fostering indigenous communication systems in Nigeria, adopts a desk review as the research design. A desk review, also known as a literature review or secondary data analysis, involves the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of existing research, reports, publications, and other relevant documents. This method is particularly suitable for this study, as it allows for an extensive examination of previous work on digital media, indigenous communication systems, and the intersection of the two within the Nigerian context. The desk review involved sourcing data from academic journals, books, conference papers, government reports, and credible online sources. The focus was on identifying key themes, trends, and findings that highlighted how digital media tools have been utilised to support, preserve, and enhance indigenous communication practices in Nigeria.

The review process involved a critical analysis of the selected literature, with the aim of synthesising existing knowledge and identifying gaps that the current study can address. This approach enabled the research to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of digital media usage in relation to indigenous communication systems, including the challenges and opportunities involved. The methodology also included thematic analysis to categorise and interpret the data, ensuring that the study provides clear insights into how digital media can effectively serve as channels for fostering indigenous communication in Nigeria. The desk review was culminated in a discussion of the implications of the findings, offering recommendations for future research and practical strategies for leveraging digital media to support indigenous communication systems. Themes were deduced deductively following the research objectives. The following themes were deduced: thee current state of indigenous communication systems in Nigeria and their representation on digital media platforms; the challenges hindering the integration of indigenous communication systems into digital media; the opportunities provided by digital media tools for prioritising and preserving

indigenous communication systems in Nigeria; and strategies for enhancing the use of digital media in fostering indigenous communication systems in Nigeria. These were presented and discussed below

Results and Discussions

The current state of indigenous communication systems in Nigeria and their representation on digital media platforms: Indigenous communication systems in Nigeria are deeply rooted in the country's rich cultural heritage, serving as vital channels for conveying messages within and between communities. These systems encompass a wide range of traditional media, including oral narratives, folk tales, proverbs, music, dances, symbols, and festivals, which have historically played crucial roles in the social, political, and religious life of various ethnic groups (Onwuegbuna & Ezeh, 2019). These traditional forms of communication are not only mediums for sharing information but also for preserving and transmitting cultural values and collective memory across generations. Despite the advent of modern communication technologies, these indigenous systems remain relevant, particularly in rural areas where they continue to function as effective means of mobilising and educating communities. However, the representation of these indigenous communication systems on digital media platforms is still in its nascent stage. Digital platforms such as social media, websites, and mobile applications have the potential to increase the visibility and accessibility of Nigeria's indigenous communication systems, but this potential has yet to be fully realised. Research indicates that while there are some initiatives aimed at digitising traditional cultural content exist, these efforts are often fragmented and lack the coordinated approach needed to ensure widespread reach and impact (Okoro & Nwafor, 2020). Moreover, the content that does exist on digital platforms is frequently diluted or misrepresented, failing to capture the full depth and context of the original indigenous communication forms.

In terms of digital media representation, there is a noticeable gap between the richness of Nigeria's indigenous communication systems and their portrayal online. The underrepresentation is partly due to the dominance of Western-centric content on digital platforms, which often side-lines non-Western cultures and communication practices. Additionally, the digital divide in Nigeria, characterised by disparities in internet access and digital literacy, further exacerbates this issue, limiting the ability of many communities to create and share digital content that reflects their indigenous heritage (Ajibade & Adekunle, 2021). As a result, much of the content related to indigenous communication systems that do appear online is produced by outsiders, which can lead to misinterpretations and a loss of authenticity. To address these challenges, there is a growing call for more inclusive digital strategies that prioritise the documentation, preservation, and promotion of indigenous communication systems in Nigeria. This involves not only increasing the digital literacy of local communities but also developing platforms that are tailored to the unique needs and preferences of these communities. By empowering indigenous groups to take control of how their cultural narratives are represented online, there is an opportunity to ensure that Nigeria's rich cultural heritage is not only preserved but also shared with a global audience in a way that is authentic and respectful (Nwachukwu, 2022). In doing so, digital media can serve as a powerful tool for sustaining and revitalising indigenous communication systems in the digital age.

The challenges hindering the integration of indigenous communication systems into digital media: The integration of indigenous communication systems into digital media faces

several significant challenges, primarily stemming from technological and infrastructural limitations. Many indigenous communities in Nigeria experience limited access to reliable internet and modern digital devices, which restricts their ability to engage with and utilise digital platforms effectively. This digital divide is exacerbated by the uneven distribution of resources and infrastructure, leaving rural and marginalised communities at a disadvantage compared with urban areas (Ajibade & Adekunle, 2021). Without the necessary technology and connectivity, these communities struggle to digitise and share their traditional communication forms, thereby hindering their broader representation online. Another major challenge is the lack of digital literacy and technical skills within many indigenous communities. The successful integration of indigenous communication systems into digital media requires not only access to technology but also the knowledge and skills to use it effectively. Many community members may lack the training needed to create, manage, and disseminate digital content, resulting in a barrier to the effective use of digital platforms for preserving and promoting their cultural heritage (Okoro & Nwafor, 2020). This gap in digital literacy can lead to the underutilisation of digital tools and missed opportunities for sharing indigenous narratives and traditions with a wider audience.

Furthermore, the dominance of Western-centric content and perspectives on digital media platforms contributes to the marginalisation and misrepresentation of indigenous communication systems. Digital media spaces are often dominated by content that reflects Western values and norms, which can overshadow and dilute the unique aspects of indigenous cultures (Nwachukwu, 2022). This lack of representation not only undermines the authenticity of indigenous content but also limits the visibility and impact of these traditional communication systems in the global digital arena. Additionally, the challenges in adapting indigenous communication forms to fit the often standardised formats of digital media further complicate their integration. Finally, there is a need for culturally sensitive digital strategies that respect and preserve the integrity of indigenous communication systems. Many existing digital platforms and tools are not designed with the specific needs and contexts of indigenous communities in mind. To effectively integrate these systems into digital media, there must be a concerted effort to develop and implement digital solutions that accommodate the diverse cultural expressions and communication practices of these communities (Onwuegbuna & Ezeh, 2019). This includes creating platforms that support local languages, traditional narratives, and community driven content, which can help ensure that indigenous communication systems are represented authentically and respectfully online.

The opportunities provided by digital media tools for promoting and preserving indigenous communication systems in Nigeria: Digital media tools offer significant opportunities for the promotion and preservation of indigenous communication systems in Nigeria by enhancing visibility and accessibility. Through platforms such as social media, websites, and mobile applications, indigenous communities can share their traditional narratives, rituals, and cultural practices with a global audience. This increased visibility not only helps in preserving these practices but also raises awareness and appreciation among broader audiences (Nwachukwu, 2022). Digital media enables the documentation of oral traditions and folklore, which might otherwise be lost, ensuring that these cultural elements are archived and accessible for future generations. Additionally, digital media tools facilitate the creation of interactive and engaging content that can effectively showcase indigenous communication systems. Multimedia formats such as videos, podcasts, and virtual reality can capture the dynamic aspects of traditional communication practices, such as storytelling, music, and dance. Compared with traditional print media, these formats provide a richer and

more immersive experience, allowing users to experience indigenous cultures in a more vibrant and interactive manner (Ajibade & Adekunle, 2021). By leveraging these tools, indigenous communities can present their cultures in ways that are both engaging and educational, fostering a deeper understanding and connection among diverse audiences.

Furthermore, digital media platforms offer opportunities for community-driven content creation and dissemination, allowing indigenous groups to control how their cultural heritage is represented. Social media and other digital tools empower communities to create and share their own content, bypassing traditional gatekeepers and media intermediaries. This autonomy enables indigenous peoples to present their traditions and stories on their own terms, ensuring that the portrayal of their cultures remains authentic and accurate (Okoro & Nwafor, 2020). This direct engagement also facilitates greater community involvement and participation in the preservation efforts, strengthening the collective effort to maintain cultural heritage. Finally, digital media tools can foster collaboration and support networks among indigenous communities and cultural organisations. Online platforms provide spaces for communities to connect, share resources, and collaborate on projects aimed at preserving and promoting their cultural practices. Initiatives such as digital archives, virtual exhibitions, and online forums enable the pooling of knowledge and resources, facilitating joint efforts in cultural preservation and promotion (Onwuegbuna & Ezeh, 2019). This collaborative approach enhances the effectiveness of preservation strategies and amplifies the impact of digital media efforts in safeguarding indigenous communication systems.

Strategies for enhancing the use of digital media in fostering indigenous communication systems in Nigeria: One effective strategy for enhancing the use of digital media in fostering indigenous communication systems is to develop and promote culturally relevant digital content that accurately reflects traditional practices and values. This involves creating multimedia resources such as videos, digital storytelling, and virtual reality experiences that showcase indigenous cultures in their authentic form. Collaborations between digital content creators and indigenous communities can ensure that these representations are respectful and accurate, capturing the essence of traditional communication methods while making them accessible to a global audience (Nwachukwu, 2022). By focusing on quality and cultural sensitivity, digital media can serve as a powerful tool for preserving and promoting indigenous heritage. Another crucial strategy is to improve digital literacy and technical skills within indigenous communities. Providing training and resources that empower community members to use digital tools effectively can bridge the gap between traditional practices and modern technology. Educational programs and workshops can be tailored to teach digital content creation, online communication, and social media management, enabling communities to produce and share their own content. This approach not only enhances the capacity of indigenous groups to engage with digital media but also supports the creation of content that genuinely reflects their cultural narratives (Okoro & Nwafor, 2020). Building local expertise in digital media can lead to more robust and sustained efforts in preserving indigenous communication systems.

Additionally, fostering partnerships between indigenous communities, digital media platforms, and cultural organisations can facilitate the development of tailored digital solutions. These collaborations can lead to the creation of platforms and tools designed specifically to accommodate the needs of indigenous groups, such as multilingual websites, culturally appropriate designs, and secure digital archives. Such partnerships can also help in advocating for policies that support the inclusion of indigenous perspectives in the digital

space. By aligning digital media tools with the unique requirements of indigenous communication systems, these strategies can enhance the effectiveness and reach of digital preservation efforts (Ajibade & Adekunle, 2021). Finally, implementing and supporting digital preservation projects that focus on archiving and documenting indigenous communication systems can ensure the long-term sustainability of these efforts. Digital archives, online databases, and virtual museums can serve as repositories for traditional knowledge, folklore, and historical records. These platforms not only protect valuable cultural heritage from being lost but also make it accessible for future research and educational purposes. Investment in digital preservation infrastructure and collaborative projects involving indigenous communities can enhance the ability to maintain and share cultural heritage over time (Onwuegbuna & Ezeh, 2019). By prioritising preservation, digital media can contribute significantly to the safeguarding of indigenous communication systems.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: What is the current state of indigenous communication systems in Nigeria, and how are they represented on digital media platforms?

The results showed that while these traditional forms of communication remain vital within communities, particularly in rural areas, their representation on digital media platforms is still limited and often misrepresented. The digital divide and dominance of Western-centric content have contributed to the underrepresentation and potential dilution of Nigeria's rich cultural heritage online. However, there is a growing recognition of the need for more inclusive digital strategies that empower indigenous communities to preserve and share their cultural narratives authentically in the digital age. The findings are in tandem with that of Akinyemi (2021) who reported that indigenous communication systems are underrepresented on social media, with limited content focused on traditional forms of communication. However, interest among young content creators in showcasing their cultural heritage online has increased. Cultural modernisation theory and technological determinism theory offer valuable insights into understanding the challenges of representing traditional communication systems on digital media platforms. Cultural modernisation theory suggests that as societies modernise, there is often a shift from traditional to modern forms of communication, potentially leading to the marginalisation of indigenous practices in favour of more globally dominant cultures. This theory explains how the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of Nigeria's cultural heritage online might stem from a broader societal shift towards Western-centric content, which tends to dominate digital platforms. On the other hand, technological determinism theory posits that technology itself shapes societal changes, suggesting that the digital divide and unequal access to digital tools in rural areas limit the ability of these communities to represent their cultural practices online. Together, these theories highlight the complex interplay between cultural shifts and technological access, underscoring the need for strategies that bridge the digital divide and preserve indigenous communication systems in the face of global cultural modernisation. The implications of this finding suggest that the limited and often misrepresented presence of traditional communication forms on digital platforms could lead to the gradual erosion of indigenous knowledge and cultural identity, particularly among younger generations who are more engaged with digital media. This underscores the need for deliberate efforts to preserve and accurately represent these systems in the digital realm to ensure their continuity and relevance in modern communication practices.

Research Question Two: What are the key challenges hindering the integration of indigenous communication systems into digital media?

The findings revealed that the integration of indigenous communication systems into digital media is hindered by technological limitations, a lack of digital literacy, the dominance of Western-centric content, and the absence of culturally sensitive digital platforms, all of which restrict the effective digitisation, representation, and preservation of these traditional communication practices. The findings align with that of Ndubuisi (2020) who reported several barriers, including the digital divide, lack of digital literacy, cultural homogenisation, and insufficient funding for digital content creation. Cultural modernisation theory is relevant to this finding as it explains how the integration of indigenous communication systems into digital media is challenged by the pressures of modernisation, which often prioritise global and technologically advanced forms of communication over traditional, culturally specific practices. As societies modernise, there is a tendency for indigenous knowledge and communication systems tend to overlooked or inadequately supported, particularly when digital platforms are not designed with cultural sensitivity in mind. This theory highlights the risk that technological advancements and the push towards modernity could marginalise indigenous communication systems unless deliberate efforts are made to include and adapt these practices within digital frameworks. The implications of this finding indicate that the technological limitations, lack of digital literacy, and dominance of Western-centric content impede the integration of indigenous communication systems into digital media, potentially marginalising local cultures and voices in the digital landscape.

Research Question Three: What opportunities do digital media tools offer for promoting and preserving indigenous communication systems in Nigeria?

The findings showed that digital media tools offered valuable opportunities for promoting and preserving indigenous communication systems in Nigeria by enhancing visibility, creating immersive content, empowering community-driven representation, and fostering collaboration among cultural organisations, thereby supporting the documentation and global appreciation of traditional practices. The findings are in consistent with that of Adebanjo, (2022) who reported that digital media provides vast opportunities for cultural preservation, including broader audience reach, interactive engagement, and innovative content formats. However, it also emphasised the need for culturally sensitive content and strategic content creation. Technological determinism theory is relevant to this finding, as it suggests that the advancements in digital media tools inherently shape and drive opportunities for promoting and preserving indigenous communication systems in Nigeria. According to this theory, the capabilities and features of digital technologies—such as enhanced visibility, immersive content creation, and platforms that enable community-driven representation—are not just tools but also active forces that influence and determine how cultural practices are preserved, shared, and revitalised in the digital age. This challenge not only limits the accessibility and preservation of indigenous knowledge but also risks further entrenching cultural homogenisation, where global digital platforms prioritise foreign content over local narratives, thereby weakening cultural diversity and heritage in Nigeria. The implications of this finding suggest that digital media tools provide significant opportunities to promote and preserve indigenous communication systems in Nigeria by increasing their visibility and relevance in the modern era. By enabling the creation of immersive, culturally rich content and empowering community-driven representation, digital platforms can help safeguard indigenous knowledge and practices. This fosters cultural pride, strengthens identity, and

ensures that these communication systems remain accessible to future generations while also allowing them to adapt to evolving communication trends.

Research Question Four: What strategies can be proposed to increase the use of digital media in fostering indigenous communication systems in Nigeria?

The findings revealed that effective strategies for enhancing the use of digital media in fostering indigenous communication systems in Nigeria include creating culturally relevant digital content, improving digital literacy and technical skills within communities, fostering partnerships for tailored digital solutions, and investing in digital preservation projects, all of which support the accurate representation, accessibility, and long-term sustainability of traditional cultural practices. The findings support that of Ojo (2021) who suggested several strategies, including government-led digital literacy programs, the creation of indigenous content hubs, partnerships between tech companies and cultural organisations, and the use of incentives to encourage content creation in indigenous languages. Cultural modernisation theory and technological determinism theory are both relevant to this finding, as they together explain how the success of strategies for enhancing the use of digital media in fostering indigenous communication systems in Nigeria depends on addressing the cultural shifts brought about by modernisation, which often marginalises traditional practices, and the inherent power of technology to shape communication methods. While cultural modernisation theory emphasises the need to integrate culturally relevant content to preserve indigenous identity amid modernisation, Technological determinism theory underscores the role of digital literacy and the transformative impact of technology in determining how effectively these traditional systems are adapted and sustained in the digital era.

The findings from the study on utilising digital media tools to foster indigenous communication systems in Nigeria hold significant implications for both policy and practice. From a policy perspective, there is a need for the Nigerian government to develop a more comprehensive framework that encourages the integration of indigenous languages and cultural practices into the digital space. The preservation of Nigeria's diverse linguistic heritage could be enhanced through policies that support the creation of digital content in local languages and the development of technology-based solutions that promote their usage. For example, the government could provide incentives for app developers, media outlets, and tech companies to create platforms and tools aimed at supporting indigenous languages, such as mobile dictionaries, interactive learning apps, and language-specific content for social media platforms. Additionally, the Ministry of Education could mandate the incorporation of digital media tools in schools, where indigenous languages are taught as part of the curriculum, promoting both digital literacy and cultural preservation.

In practice, these findings suggest that stakeholders—such as local communities, media practitioners, and educators—should actively embrace digital tools to safeguard Nigeria's indigenous communication systems. Media organisations and cultural institutions can collaborate to create more indigenous language content across digital platforms, ensuring that traditional communication practices are not left behind in the age of digital globalisation. Furthermore, educational institutions can leverage these digital resources to teach local languages and customs, ensuring that younger generations remain connected to their cultural heritage. This practical approach also requires collaboration between tech companies and indigenous communities to create digital content that reflects local knowledge systems, such as traditional storytelling, local history, and indigenous proverbs. With the right policies and

practices in place, digital media can become a powerful tool for fostering the growth and sustainability of indigenous communication systems in Nigeria. The implications of this finding indicate that developing culturally relevant digital content, alongside improving digital literacy and technical skills within communities, is crucial for effectively integrating indigenous communication systems into the digital landscape. This approach not only ensures that local cultures are preserved and accurately represented online, but it also empowers communities to actively participate in the digital economy, bridge the digital divide, and sustain their cultural heritage in an increasingly globalised world.

Conclusion

The study concluded that while traditional forms of communication continue to play a crucial role in fostering communal interactions, especially in rural areas, their presence on digital media platforms is sparse and often inaccurately portrayed, risking the loss of authenticity and cultural significance. The underrepresentation of Nigeria's indigenous communication systems on digital media platforms highlights the need for more inclusive and culturally sensitive approaches to digital content creation, ensuring that these rich traditions are preserved and accurately portrayed in the digital age. The challenges of technological access, digital media literacy, cultural representation, and platform design significantly impede the effective integration of indigenous communication systems into digital media, undermining the preservation and visibility of these traditional practices.

Additionally, the study established that digital media tools significantly enhance the promotion and preservation of indigenous communication systems in Nigeria by providing platforms for greater visibility, interactive content, authentic representation, and collaborative efforts, thereby supporting the safeguarding and global sharing of cultural heritage. To effectively foster indigenous communication systems through digital media in Nigeria, it is essential to create culturally relevant content, enhance digital literacy, build collaborative partnerships, and invest in preservation projects, thereby ensuring accurate representation and long-term sustainability of traditional practices.

This study makes a unique contribution to the fields of communication and cultural studies by highlighting the crucial intersection between digital media and the preservation of indigenous communication systems in Nigeria. While much research has focused on the role of digital media in promoting global communication, this study delved into how these tools can be repurposed to sustain local languages and cultural practices. It provides an innovative perspective by showcasing the opportunities that digital platforms offer for the survival and revitalisation of indigenous communication forms, which are often threatened by globalisation and modernisation. By focusing on Nigerian communities, the study enriches the growing body of knowledge on the role of technology in cultural preservation, emphasising that the digital space is not only a domain for global interaction but also a critical avenue for the empowerment and survival of local traditions.

The practical implications of this study are profound for digital media practitioners and policymakers in Nigeria. For digital media professionals, the findings encourage the creation of more indigenous language content, which can cater to both local and diaspora audiences, thereby ensuring the survival of these languages in the digital age. Platforms like YouTube, podcasts, and social media can be harnessed to share traditional stories, historical knowledge, and indigenous communication practices. For policymakers, the study suggests the need to

implement strategies that integrate digital media tools into language and cultural preservation efforts. This could involve funding initiatives that promote the development of indigenous language applications and media content, as well as providing the necessary infrastructure for local communities to access and participate in the digital ecosystem. Through these efforts, Nigeria can create a model for how digital technology can be leveraged to strengthen indigenous communication systems.

This study's unique contribution lies in its exploration of how digital media tools can be harnessed to revitalise and promote indigenous communication systems in Nigeria, offering a framework for integrating traditional communication practices with modern technology to preserve cultural heritage while enhancing local information dissemination and engagement. This approach bridges the gap between modern digital platforms and indigenous knowledge systems, emphasising their coexistence and mutual reinforcement in the Nigerian communication landscape.

Recommendations

In view of the findings from this work, the following recommendations have been made.

1) Digital media platforms have to collaborate with cultural custodians to ensure accurate representation and amplification of indigenous communication systems in the digital space
2) The digital infrastructure should be improved, digital literacy in indigenous communities should be enhanced, and culturally sensitive digital platforms that support and accurately represent indigenous communication systems should be developed.
3) There is a need to leverage on digital media tools to create engaging content, support community-led digital projects, and facilitate cross-community collaboration in preserving and promoting indigenous communication systems.
4) There is a need to focus on developing culturally sensitive digital content, improving community digital skills, establishing strategic partnerships, and supporting digital preservation initiatives to enhance the integration and preservation of indigenous communication systems.

REFERENCES

Adebanjo, O., & Olukoya, T. (2023). Digital media and cultural preservation in Nigeria: Opportunities and challenges. *Journal of African Media Studies, 15*(2), 120-135.

Adebanjo, T. (2022). Opportunities in digital media for the preservation of indigenous communication in Nigeria. *International Journal of Cultural Studies, 16*(4), 201-219.

Adebanjo, T. (2023). Digital media and cultural preservation in Nigeria: Opportunities and challenges. *African Journal of Communication Studies, 15*(3), 102-118.

Adetunji, O. (2023). The role of social media influencers in promoting Nigerian culture. *Journal of New Media and Society, 12*(2), 45-61.

Ajibade, O., & Adekunle, A. (2021). The digital divide and indigenous communication systems in Nigeria. *Journal of Communication and Media Research, 13*(2), 45-61.

Akinyemi, F. (2021). Indigenous communication systems and the digital age: An analysis of representation on social media. *Journal of African Media Studies, 13*(2), 123-140.

Akinyemi, F. (2023). Indigenous communication systems and cultural identity in Nigeria. *Journal of African Cultural Studies, 25*(4), 304-319.

Bello, M. (2023). Government policies and the promotion of indigenous cultures through digital media in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Policy and Development, 8*(1), 77-92.

Chika, E. (2022). Digital media as a tool for social cohesion in Nigeria. *International Journal of Communication and Social Change, 10*(3), 65-81.

Eze, A., & Ibrahim, S. (2024). Enhancing indigenous communication through digital platforms: Strategies and best practices. *African Journal of Communication, 10*(1), 55-70.

Eze, I. (2022). Digital storytelling in Nigerian education: Enhancing cultural understanding. *Journal of Educational Technology, 20*(2), 123-140.

Inglehart, R. (1977). *The silent revolution: Changing values and political styles among Western publics.* Princeton University Press.

Ka'ai, T. (2022). The role of digital platforms in the revitalisation of indigenous languages: A case study of Te Aka Māori dictionary. *Journal of Indigenous Communication, 34*(2), 15-28.

National Bureau of Statistics. (2022). *Internet penetration and digital literacy in Nigeria: A report on urban-rural disparities.* Abuja NBS.

Ndubuisi, P. (2020). Barriers to the digital integration of indigenous communication in Nigeria. *African Communication Research, 12*(1), 45-61.

Ndubuisi, P. (2023). Cultural homogenisation and the challenges of preserving indigenous knowledge systems in the digital age. *Global Media Journal, 17*(1), 55-70.

Nwabueze, C., & Obiora, I. (2023). Media and political communication in Nigeria: Trends and transformations. *Journal of African Media Studies, 15* (2), 201- 218.

Nwachukwu, E. (2022). Empowering indigenous communities through digital media: A case study of Nigeria. *International Journal of Cultural Studies, 9*(1), 32-50.

Obi, K. (2024). The digital divide and the future of indigenous communication in Nigeria. *Communication Research and Practice, 22*(1), 89-103.

Ojebuyi, B. R., & Salawu, A. (2023*). Indigenous language preservation in Nigeria: The potential of digital media*. Springer

Ojo, A. (2021). Strategies for promoting indigenous communication through digital platforms in Nigeria. *Journal of Communication and Media Studies, 15*(3), 102-118.

Ojo, A. (2022). Bridging the gap between traditional and modern communication systems through digital media. *Media and Communication Research, 14*(3), 99-115.

Okafor, J. (2023). Intellectual property rights and the protection of indigenous content in Nigeria. *Nigerian Law Review, 30*(2), 187-202.

Okonkwo, C. (2023). Indigenous communication systems in Nigeria: A cultural heritage under threat. *Nigerian Journal of Culture and Communication, 18*(3), 45-58.

Okoro, N., & Nwafor, C. (2020). Digitising tradition: The challenges and prospects of indigenous communication systems in the digital age. *Journal of African Media Studies, 12*(3), 213-229.

Oluwole, K. (2023). Collaboration for cultural preservation: The role of partnerships in promoting indigenous languages through digital media. *Journal of African Studies, 19*(3), 221-238.

Onwuegbuna, F., & Ezeh, A. (2019). Indigenous communication systems in Nigeria: Evolution and contemporary relevance. *African Communication Research, 11*(4), 102-118.

Postman, N. (2000). *Building a bridge to the 18th century: How the past can improve our future*. Vintage.

Uche, N. (2023). The economic potential of Nigeria's creative economy in the digital age. *Journal of Creative Industries, 8*(1), 34-49.

Welzel, C., & Inglehart, R. (2005). *Modernisation, cultural change, and democracy: The human development sequence*. Cambridge University Press.

Williams, R. (2003). *Television: Technology and cultural form*. Routledge.